TELOS

NUMBER 113 FALL 1998

Toward
A Liturgical Critique of Modernity

Russell A. Berman: Creation and Culture
Paul Piccone: Modernity, Liturgy and Reification
Catherine Pickstock: Liturgy and Modernity
John Milbank: The Politics of Time
McMylor & Vorozhishcheva: The Displacement of Liturgy
Aryeh Botwinick: Religion and Secularism in Liberalism
Paul Gottfried: Liturgy and Postmodernism
Nicholas Adams: Benjamin on Liturgical Embodiment

Notes and Reviews:

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Subscription Rates

One-year Individual . . . $40.00 One-year Institutional $95.00
Two-years Individual . . . $80.00 Two-years Institutional. . . .$190.00
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Back Issues available: ns. 13, 17-18 20-51, 53-112 at $14.00 each ($30.00 for institutions). Foreign orders, add 15%. For the "Table of Contents" of all back issues, see our Web site. All payments must be in U.S. currency. Out of print issues (ns. 1-12, 14-16, 19, 52) can be obtained in microform or facsimile through University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106, US.

Telos number 113 corresponds to Vol. 30, No. 3. ***Telos*** is published in the Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter by Telos Press Ltd. Periodicals postage paid at New York and additional mailing offices. Send address changes and inquiries to:

Telos
431 E. 12th Street, New York, NY 10009

© 1998, Telos Press Ltd. ISSN 0090-6514
Tel.: # 212-228-6479 Fax: # 212-228-6379 e-mail: telospress@aol.com
Web site: http/www.angelfire.com/biz/telospress/index.html

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Creation and Culture: Introduction to "Toward a Liturgical Critique of Modernity"

Russell A. Berman

This issue of *Telos* includes several articles that address questions of religion and liturgy, especially in their capacity as vehicles of a critique of modernity. The arguments are varied and the accounts of religion by no means mutually compatible. Yet, prior to any consideration of the individual positions, it is urgent to anticipate the apprehension that this "liturgical turn" probably awakens. Readers of the journal are accustomed to theory, of course, but typically in its relation to philosophical or political issues which in one way or another derive from the concerns of a self-critical Left: heterodox neo-Marxism, East European dissidence, debates on federalism and affirmative action. While the positions advocated have frequently run counter to the *pensée unique* of established Left liberalism, the topics themselves were right on the radar screen. But now religion?

The secularism of American society, which seems to render religion a private concern, and usually not a very large one, plus the historical anticlericalism of the Left make religion an odd choice. Why waste time on the opiates of the people instead of writing about the real drug wars? In there not a risk of being confused with the moral majority and the politicized religious Right? With so much at stake in the "real" world, why squander energy on an unreal one?

Yet, that sort of interrogation — is there nothing better, something more relevant, to write about? — not only forecloses prematurely the debate over the potential relevance of religion to Critical Theory, which is examined in the following articles, it also betrays an atavistic, nuts-and-bolts Marxism that denounces any experimental thinking that does not

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contribute directly to the immediate issue at hand. Thankfully, Critical Theory never buckled under that sort of policing. Recall for a moment the classical reflection on the seemingly most otherworldly literary genre, Adorno's speech on "Lyric Poetry and Society." That foundational text of Frankfurt-School literary criticism engages in a double-edged advocacy. On the surface, Adorno commences by addressing the sensibility of "work immanent criticism," the German corollary to New Criticism, anticipating probable objections to his claim that the social realm, the object of sociological reflection, is relevant to an understanding of lyric verse, for that is precisely what he proceeds to demonstrate with reference to poems by Goethe, Mörike, and George. Yet, more significantly, and more importantly in the reception history of the article, he cleverly makes the book-end argument: not only is society important for poetry, but poetry is important for society, indeed more so than the other way around, for it is through poetry that social processes of individuation are carried out. Thanks to poetry, society comes into its own as modern, while it is primarily through poetic expression that a fully successful society of an unrealized future is invoked and anticipated. Of course, there are moments in the essay which seem intent on suggesting a possible literary sociology that might, for example, rediscover within the poetic text telltale signs of its social origin. Yet, ultimately this remains secondary. Much more important is the productive and anticipatory role the poem plays in articulating the "voice of humans between whom the barriers have fallen."[1] This position is directed explicitly against the reductionist Left, caught in more or less simplistic reflection theories and obsessively suspicious of the "formalism" of poetry.

Instead of reflection theory, Adorno's essay demonstrates the non-identity of the poem with its precise social context: as a vessel for a "collective substratum," it remembers the past, while it also looks toward a future, as it criticizes the present as a "philosophical sundial of history."[2] The lyric is in effect the very precondition of being human — not in the sense of evolutionary hominization, but as a cultivation of the proper sensibility expected in a genuinely human behavior. It is the lyric poem that can undermine the reified concepts of social life and reshuffle the deck of a bad historical moment. Far from some pedantic insistence on rediscovering the structures of society within the structure of the work of art — that

1. Theodor W. Adorno, "Lyric Poetry and Society," tr. by Bruce Mayo, in *Telos* 20 (Summer 1974), p. 71.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 64 and 65.

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would have been Lucien Goldmann's project for a structural literary sociology — Adorno insists on the work of art as an engine of experiment and imagination, always critical of the frozen patterns of life, always pointing toward a beyond and therefore constituting the possibility of alternatives.

When it was first published in 1958, Adorno's advocacy for lyric poetry made little sense to the orthodox Left of the Cold War era, nor did the *Telos* translation in 1974 exhilarate the American New Left in its period of disintegration. If the essay is better known today, it is due, presumably, to the fact that it is regularly misread as a source for the sort of ideology criticism that circulates as a general suspicion directed at the aesthetic ideology, as Robert Kaufman has shown.[3] *Mutatis mutandis*, for the topic of religion, which, like poetry, is hardly just another variant of preexisting belief structures (which is how "culture" is misunderstood today in ethnographic terms); nor is it merely a deceptive ideological expression of nefarious class interests. In the most general of terms, what religion has in common with poetry is its reference to that which eludes determination by the categories of the merely given: an ineffable alterity, whose presence, or better, absent presence, perpetually limits and calls into question any so-called realism that might idolize the *status quo*.

At the very least, the political project of imagining a better life might not be fully unrelated to the religious thematics of another life. Nevertheless, this will be a hard case to make, given the intellectuals' anti-religious disposition. Luckily, one can point to some material that borders on the religious dimension and that has concerned *Telos* in the past: Bloch's fascination with the irrational and the utopian, and Landauer's specific interest in medieval sensibility. While these both represent minority positions in the history of the Left, they are indisputably crucial anti-traditions that have enriched the discussions in these pages. For the wider progressive legacy, beyond the specific concerns of this journal, one might point to the history of the Catholic Left or to liberation theology as evidence on two points: that religion is not necessarily separate from the political, and that a resonance between religion and politics is not necessarily a prerogative of the Right. Yet, in contrast to various examples in which religious material becomes "politicized" and deployed within specific historical settings, the underlying concern in this issue of *Telos* is the manner in which ultimately certain religious topics may be constitutive of political life: despite the anti-religiosity of the Enlightenment legacy — *Ecrasez*

3. Robert Kaufman, "Adorno's Lyric Poetry, with Two Experiments by Michael Palmer," unpublished manuscript.

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l'infame! — and despite the hegemonic secularism of the Left.

Interestingly, both of those sources of an anti-religious disposition — the Enlightenment and the Left — are cited in this issue as evidence precisely for the exploration of religion. As Milbank points out, the origins of the modern Left in the utopian socialism of the early 19th century represented a response to the disappointments of the French Revolution and to the harshness of the emerging free market regime. Frequently, aspirations to establish social communities on the basis of human relations of greater solidarity were articulated in specifically religious terms, so, at the very least, the current reexamination of religion involves a return to an initial stage of the Left, not as a regression, but as an inquiry in order to determine whether lost potentials might be recovered. For Milbank and for Pickstock, the critical project involves describing the possible community of a public — this sense is at the etymological root of "liturgy" — of shared belief, not in order to achieve a homogeneity, but rather precisely as an alternative to established power. The point is not that everyone must share the same belief, but rather that it is the nature of a community of faith to call into question the *status quo* of this-wordly relations. Nevertheless, some responses query Pickstock's particular insistence on one liturgy.

With regard to Enlightenment, one hardly has to make the case of its animosity to religion: this is the stuff of commonly-received opinion. So it is striking to read how Botwinick, pursuing a sophisticated critique of Levinas, undertakes readings of Maimonides, Hobbes, and Machiavelli, who are treated as exponents of a tradition of skepticism. Botwinick demonstrates how this skepticism includes both negative theology, i.e., withholding any positive determinations of the divinity as inimical to its incommensurability with human language, and Enlightenment, with the doubts it directs toward all traditions. If skepticism always doubts the given, it implies the potential of going beyond it; hence, doubt becomes the precondition of faith, but only as faith in an unknown, that which transcends human experience, and which, at best, is available to merely metaphoric description. Therefore, the Enlightenment relegates religion to the private sphere, not in order to diminish it or because it is simply too unimportant. On the contrary, displaced into the private sphere, religion is rescued from what would surely become a public celebration of a specific and positive faith — Pickstock's liturgy? — the very positivity of which would undercut the absolutely transcendent and limitless character of the divine substance. Moreover, Botwinick sees this privatization of religion not as weakening religion, but as fully consonant with the

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Enlightenment's project of diffusing power and "checks and balances": if religion is private, and the state can make no claim to spiritual authority, every citizen can direct toward the state a skepticism derived from faith and its doubts regarding this world.

Clearly, Botwinick's argument for Enlightenment skepticism and the privatization of faith stands at odds with Pickstock and Milbank and their call for a liturgical community. Yet, while the liturgical project has raised concerns about the potential for a constrictive homogeneity — what happens to religious difference? — Botwinick runs the symmetrical risk of sliding from his advocacy of faith through skepticism to a standard liberalism, with little faith in anything and certainly no community. Is alienation the best one can hope for? Is there a path between the potentially-oppressive community and the fully-atomized individual? The polarities in the discussion are familiar, both for social theory and for religion: the congregation may be the source of solidarity, but perhaps also of complacency and conformism, while the intensity of the individual believer can also entail an egoistic disregard for the world.

There are substantial differences between these arguments, and the articles included in this issue can hardly be reduced to a single position. But despite their profound differences Botwinick, Milbank, and Pickstock agree on the project of articulating criticisms of a dogmatic secularism which would proscribe any inquiry into religious questions. Obligatory atheism may wrap itself in a tricolor of progressivism, but it is probably, at best, just a lack of imagination, a politically-correct glorification of a bad present. The discussions of the liturgical and the infinite, which are at the core of the concern with religion in this issue, are particularly urgent, insofar as they provide alternatives to the reductionistic or naturalistic understandings of community that circulate in contemporary cultural studies and in the social sciences.

Pursuing these discussions is very much in the tradition of Critical Theory's inquiry into the social and cultural structures that inhibit human potential. Oppressive regimes, bureaucratic intrusiveness, ideological delusions, cultural neuroses — bad forms of life that prevent individuals and society from realizing their creative abilities — are the concern of Critical Theory. In that spirit, this turn or return to religious topics is concerned with the very relation between culture and creation. The faddish notions current in academic circles regarding "constructed subjectivity" or "invented traditions" are not fully wrong in all their observations and in their attempts to describe culture. Of course, cultural phenomena are relational and therefore

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"constructed," just as no tradition survives without participation and invention. Nevertheless, the discourse-theoretical treatment of culture rarely gets beyond a clunky ideology-criticism precisely because of its avoidance of any consideration of that which might be beyond culture. Once culture becomes all inclusive, it becomes constrictive and oppressive, prohibiting the new, that which is not limited or predetermined in advance.

Navigating between cultural community and cultural innovation requires some reflection on the question of creation. To say that human beings are created means that there are limits, an inherited past, both shared traditions and personal experience, and that this terrain, this world, cannot be easily ignored. Memories of achievement as well as irretrievable loss may frame life, be it as celebrated recollection or as silent facts, and it is necessary to come to grips with this objectivity. But remembering this creation, there is the chance to imitate it and to become creators, by aspiring to the realization of potential in the future: the world is not closed, and its non-identity constitutes freedom. Recognition of creation — both the fact of createdness and the potential for innovation — is at its core not a cultural phenomenon, a specific belief or value to be ascribed to this or that opinion group — but rather the precondition of culture *per se*, since it entails facing up simultaneously to the legacy of tradition and to the opportunity for the new. Creation is the air in which culture breathes, because it includes an intuition of the infinite beyond the merely given world and the human present, and because it represents the marvel at the limitlessness of invention, the never-closed-off future. Culture ceases to be trivially arbitrary, when one understands how it is suspended as always already, after creation; culture moves toward its aspiration as it aspires to the not-yet, creating the future. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, an author as emphatically part of the 18th century Enlightenment as any, could write in the 79th section of his *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, commenting on the aesthetic of drama, but speaking to the relation between creation and culture: "The Whole of this mortal creator [i.e., a playwright — RB] should be the silhouette of the Whole of the eternal creator; it should accustom us to the idea, that just as all ends to the best in the one, so will it as well in the other."[4]

Lessing's enlightenment faith in a benevoilent providence made sense, perhaps, in an age of reason. But its invocation of creation, both human and divine, sounds oddly incongruous in today's allegedly rationalized

4. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Hamburgische Drammaturgie* (Munich: Goldmann, 1966), p. 322.

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world: as if the progress of rationalization since Lessing had itself undercut the potential for human creativity. Yet, if divine creation is no longer recognized, is creation lost altogether? The choice to examine questions of religion is, therefore, not a random foray into the exotic. On the contrary, it is a considered response to the problems of modernity and the failures, heretofore, to articulate a full critique. Neither political economy nor discourse ethics, neither consistently modernist aesthetics nor post-modern inconsistencies have been able to develop an encompassing analysis of the insufficiencies of contemporary social and cultural life. In the face of the continuing degradation of the natural environment, for example, any account that remains trapped in simplistic anthropocentric terms is unlikely to be able to halt further devastation or to thematize the human position as only part, and perhaps a humble part, of a much larger cosmos. Yet, even while modernity unleashes industrial productivity with Byronic fury against nature, it simultaneously diminishes the human to a mere object of psychology and sociology, trapped between endless therapy and engulfing bureaucracy. The result is the cultural malaise that wanders from private neuroses to public exhibitionism, and from anomie to crime. It is not hard to see how two centuries of secularization and erosions of traditions have resulted in alienated individuals, trapped in iron cages, with little access to dynamic communities, relations of solidarity, or potentials for genuine innovation, the qualitatively new. Instead, one finds an insatiable acquisitiveness and garrulous narcissism. These are the achievements that both the cultural Left and the free-marketeers call progress.

In contrast, the wager is that reflection on religion can be worth it. Is there another world? A critique of modernity has to begin with an examination of the insufficiencies of contemporary complacent egoism, incapable and unwilling to recognize its limits. The question of religion, whether as liturgy or as negative theology, involves traversing those limits. Humans first become genuinely human in the non-identical awareness of what is more than human: cross-generational obligations of tradition to the past and the future, the possibilities for the new in its relation to tradition, and the grace of opportunity in a universe inhabited by virtue of creation. Without a reflection on the creative principle, "culture" becomes the dry bones of discourse theory, always paranoid about potentials for manipulation and perpetually doubtful about the possibility of change. In that case, culture is little more than a taxonomy of artefacts, insincere values and empty beliefs, and cultural studies turn out to be part and parcel of the bad progress into a reified secularization that seeks to

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expunge any intimation of immortality. There is, however, a heavy price to pay for that expurgation, since such a "culture" of death is hardly a genuine culture at all: without a past, without a future, and without a heaven above. The result is the fully pacified community, satisfied with the merely given and therefore even unwilling to ask who gave it, separated by an abyss from that capacity for genuine culture which demands a heroism of spirit or deed that fights to the death to reconnect humanity with the gods, whose creativity is the source of all.

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Modernity, Liturgy and Reification: Remarks on the Liturgical Critique of Modernity

Paul Piccone

Ever since Walter Benjamin drafted his theses on the philosophy of history, Critical Theory has attempted to theorize beyond the crisis of modernity and its concept of progress as what Adorno mockingly described as a linear trajectory from Adam and Eve to the Atom Bomb, Auschwitz and the Gulag. Today, over half a century after the defeat of Nazism, in the post-communist age of nuclear disarmament, the *telos* of progress would have to be updated, at best, to a consumerist wasteland punctuated by McDonalds and Disneylands — an immensely less catastrophic but equally debilitating spiritual outcome. Although the Frankfurt School was always weary of any "romantic reactions" it identified with the Nazi regime, and thus never ventured too far into utopian speculations, this state of affairs meant that the search for alternative models of "the good society" need no longer automatically bypass previously discarded ones as terminally transcended, especially since it has become increasingly obvious that whatever viability modernity may still have is a function of its parasitic reliance on that same traditional cultural patrimony it otherwise pretends to replace.

Try as it might, Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment rationalism cannot squeeze any echatological content out of its purely formal framework, and ends up recycling various versions of naturalism as its axiological horizon. This, however, is reification *par excellence*: precisely the same kind of sin by condemning which modernity had dismissed pre-Enlightenment and non-Western traditions in its triumphant path to cultural hegemony. Theoretical articulations of this embarrassing predicament by, e.g., American pragmatists such as John Dewey, have resulted

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only in the hypostatization of crass opportunism to the level of a philosophical creed which, when all is said and done, can avoid creeping nihilism only by privately retaining traditional religious beliefs — part of that alleged "superstition and myth" that was supposed to have bitten the dust a couple of centuries ago.

The suspicion that too much may have been swept away by the French Revolution's wholesale house-cleaning of the *ancien régime* warrants a re-examination to determine whether it may have been too thorough, thereby depriving the Western cultural framework of its very foundations. Here is where religion makes its postmodern comeback, not as a *reactionary* longing for a return to a lost golden age that never was, but as a *radicalization* of post-1960s radicalism — a flawed radicalism which, because of its failure to actually "go back to roots," a quarter of a century later finds itself shipwrecked on the abject conformism of "political correctness." The New Left neo-Marxist vindication of the primacy of economics forgot all too readily that, even for Marx, economics was always instrumental in character. There was nothing *intrinsically* evil about either profits, "surplus value" or proletarianization outside of particular systems of values, such as the Judeo-Christian or secularized versions thereof. Even for the latter, they became such only to the extent that they de-humanized and instrumentalized people by reducing them to the level of "workers," i.e., mere objects deprived of their subjectivity and relegated to the fringes of society. The kind of subjectivity presupposed by Marx in particular and the German idealist tradition in general (a secularized version of the Christian "soul") has nothing to do with today's academic Left-liberal concept of an abstract individuality endowed with an ever growing list of human and civil rights. The latter is a paradigmatically "bourgeois" ideal Marx himself despised because of its vacuity, hypocrisy and passivity. Worse yet, as Bakunin and other anarchist critics of the First International never ceased to remind Marx in his old age (when he seemed to have forgotten it), the hypostatization of economics as the most fundamental dimension of being, and the reification of subjects *qua* workers by the revolutionary movement paved the way for new and even more pervasive statist relations of domination. Rather, to the extent that this subjectivity presupposes full participation in the community life it constitutes along with other such individuals, and that in the process constitutes all of them as *social* subjects (rather than mutilated *citizens* terminally caught between public politics and private interests), it is a *liturgical* subjectivity, in the proper ethymological sense of the term.

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This has nothing to do with recycling any particular set of revelations and the mythologies surrounding them by, e.g., reasserting the unchallengeable authority of the various religious institutions which have historically provided the moral cement binding communities together. Rather, the problem has to do not only with re-legitimating the various conflict-ridden and often self-contradictory traditional frameworks within which most people have operated in the past and still operate today, but also with developing political institutions that allow a variety of traditions to coexist and to develop organically, to assimilate all the technological and scientific "progress" modernity has contraposed to them as a radical alternative. Individuals who have forgotten or rejected their past have no future other than as abstract consumers mired in the kind of narcissistic nihilism nurtured by the unholy alliance of bureaucracy and commercialism. Today, at a time when it is becoming increasingly clear that the Enlightenment project of substituting the nation and nationalism for the Church and religion (and the State for God) has failed — and it has done so precisely for the very same reasons religion also periodically enters into crisis when the institution reifies praxis and subjectivity[1] — it is imperative to understand why this epoch-making historical development took place, beyond its own self-legitimating reading as the final achievement of civilization. Yet, an event of this magnitude — best described in terms of "secularization" — are never sheer "mistakes." Any attempt to re-think this state of affairs must first resolve the problems that made the nationalist solution such an attractive alternative.

To the extent that so far most of the costs of the crisis of modernity have been successfully exported to the Third World, in post-industrial societies there have been relatively few casualties. Thus, most academic intellectuals, increasingly dependent on the state for their very being, have not only ignored it altogether, but have tended to interpret this crisis in terms of its *incompleteness*. The remedies proposed, far from providing any lasting

1. This is the kind of phenomenon Sartre articulated in *Critique de la Raison Dialectique*. See "The Risk of Spontaneity and the Logic of the Institution: An Interview with Jean-Paul Sartre," in *Telos* 4 (Fall 1969), pp. 191-205. Sartre's spontaneity — the existentialist version of the longing for liturgy within a context of corruption and mundanity — identifies the solution to the problems of the "human condition" with particular totalizing projects to overcome corruption and mundanity. The success of such projects, however, only recreates the unstable conditions the stabilizing of which generated the corrupt institution: the need to bridge the gap between immanence and transcendence in order to endow life with meaning. Since access to this meaning is possible only through revolutionary praxis, any institutionalization only reintroduces the same alienation once again.

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solutions, only tend to intensify it. This is why it may be much more fruitful to break out of the conformist canon and inquire into possible *alternatives* by reconfiguring what may have been prematurely discarded premodern modes of being which, despite all of their shortcomings, do not constitute the infancy of a now mature modernist culture and, as such, may provide potentially viable alternatives taking different forms in different times under different circumstances. Such a project involves the defrosting of traditions, not by "modernizing" or "secularizing" them out of the picture, but by reactivating their organicity through a new understanding of whatever ancient wisdom they may conceal. It is not so much a matter of demystification — a dogmatic maneuver presupposing an unquestioned rational otherness against which the tradition is indicted as inadequate — but of immanent critique, whereby a careful scrutiny not only locates internal inconsistencies, but also reconceptualizes teleological objectives, various ways to reach them and potential deviations therefrom.

This is an unending process. All religious traditions at the root of every culture seek the impossible reconciliation of the immanent and the transcendent and, therefore, must constantly confront failure, while devising ways to make such failures bearable to a humanity trapped in mundanity. Within such a context, the "good society" is redefined not just in terms of the way it satisfies its members' material needs. Even more important, because otherwise it cannot hold together, is how it constitutes culture by generalizing this inescapable predicament in order to negotiate and renegotiate the terms of the "human condition" between immanence and transcendence at any given time. This explains why the history of religion in general and Christianity in particular is one of periodic revolts, and why the most viable, long-lasting traditions, such as Judaism and Roman Catholicism, are the ones which have been most successful in dealing with this predicament within their liturgical practices.

This is why Catherine Pickstock's postmodern reading of the traditional Latin Mass,[2] a liturgical practice prematurely relegated to the historical dustbin by the "*aggiornatori*" of Vatican II, performs an invaluable service by unpacking its content and demonstrating how it successfully deals with the impossible reconciliation of the mundane and the divine — an ontological dimension incomprehensible through mundane categories and, therefore, approachable only through negative theology. She shows how the Eucharist, that transubstantiation dismissed by Protestants as a

2. Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (London: Blackwell, 1998).

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blasphemous degradation of spirituality, actually seeks to prefigure the possibility of reconciliation or, in modernist terms, attempts to solve the problem of the body-mind dualism, while constituting subjectivity and reconstituting the community. Far from being merely the mumble-jumbo it appears to the uninitiated, liturgical practices provide clever solutions to real problems which, left unattended, cause many of the social pathologies of modern society. Alienation is not merely the result of capitalist expropriation of objectified subjectivity — labor transubstatiated into surplus value — but, as Hegel pointed out well before Marx allegedly turned him "on his head," it has to do with the loss of organicity and with degeneration into sheer mundanity. Thus, its overcoming has to do, first and foremost, with the reintegration of subject and object in a context where the latter is not a self-contained *totality*, but rather that infinite domain usually associated with divinity. Contrary to Hegel, however, the recuperation of this ontological organicity is not already presupposed by the Spirit's very consciousness of itself as such — an aborted solution which ended up materializing the Absolute in the State — but remains an unachievable *telos* apprehensible only fleetingly in moments of mystical communion. It is precisely the promise of the possibility of achieving this organicity that liturgy sustains by constituting communities around the re-enactment of this predicament, while thereby infusing every aspect of everyday life with meaning and hope.

This way of posing the problem in terms of the possible re-enchantment of everyday life automatically translates modernity into the pathological predicament of generalized cultural alienation, i.e., the occlusion of the sources of that *doxa* Husserl saw as the foundation of all culture. Yet, it does not simultaneously yield political categories able to unequivocally point to ways of overcoming the crisis. The solution Pickstock suggests in her article in this issue is revealing: the liturgical community of Plato's *Magnesia*, while preferable to the *Kallipolis* of the *Republic*, remains nonetheless an unbearably "closed society" — to use fashionable Popperian terminology. The liturgical reconciliation between the public and the private she proposes as the standard against which modernity is condemned as terminally *dirempted* tends to provide permanent solutions to unsolvable problems. Solutions of this kind, however, are vulnerable to institutional reifications almost as pernicious as the nihilism engendered by modernity. The history of religion in general and of Roman Catholicism in particular is one of periodic bureaucratic closures instrumentalizing religion for dubious mundane objectives and leaving no room for those

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ever new and different attempts necessary to deal with the irresolvable problem of the incommensurability of the immanent and the transcendent, i.e., what she shows to be the most important feature of the Latin Mass.

Yet, this liturgical objectification is no guarantee against mundane institutional involutions. The periodic crises the Catholic Church has confronted since its very beginning, from the Benedictines to the Cistercians, the Franciscans, up to the Protestant revivals, are but instances of this constant threat to banish the liturgical into self-contained rites, leaving all else vulnerable to mundane instrumentalizations. Today, in a context where, since the development of the modern state a few centuries ago, liturgy has been turned into a purely private prerogative, there is no such a threat. Thus, Pickstock is right: as the embodiment of rapidly eroding traditions, today liturgy remains one of the most powerful sites of resistance to generalized decadence. Its vindication, however, cannot be predicated on a wholesale indictment of "secularization," without first understanding why it came about and how any proposed liturgical re-enchantment must also deal with the same problems secularization effectively solved.

In their article on "The Displacement of the Liturgical in the Formation of Modernity," Peter McMylor and Maria Vorozhishcheva proceed to identify the problems of modernity with secularization, but do not inquire into the conditions which precipitated this secularization: the religious civil wars and the rise of the modern state as a mediating agency guaranteeing peace. During the next three centuries, this state's original mediational role became upgraded into one constitutive of the community as a nation, resulting in the displacement of the liturgical dimension of religion by the pseudo-liturgy of nationalism. The latter is a pseudo-liturgy to the extent that it attempts to reconcile immanence and transcendence by deifying the state and constituting the community through events such as political rallies and, less ostantatiously and perniciously, sporting events or rock concerts. Except in extreme cases such as war, this pseudo-liturgy ends up engendering nihilism or, at best, the consumption of particular commodities substituting for the Eucharist by, e.g., "the Pepsi generation" or "the united colors of Benetton."

Why did Christianity break apart at the dawn of the modern age? Why was its nth crisis of institutional corruption not solved by the re-integration of revival monastic movements as in the past? And if the Catholic Church could no longer continue being the *complexio oppositorum* it had been for the previous millennium and a half, why did the State not develop along federalist lines, mediating among the various hostile religious communities

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without flattening all of them through a nationalist homogenization into mere aggregations of abstract individuals? If traditions thrive by growing and developing, and they die when they ossify into dogma, why do all of these frozen pre-modern traditions remain integral parts of the infrastructure of "civil society"? These questions and others are the ones generated by a systematic liturgical critique of modernity. Attempts to provide viable answers may pave the way to a reconfiguration of how modernity is approached and to possible alternatives to current quandaries.

Here, however, the occupational hazard is to shortcircuit the analysis and, having spent so much time in the theological footwork, when it comes time to think through alternatives, one falls back on the conventional wisdom of precisely that modernist framework that is to be transcended. Thus, having provided a number of very interesting insights about liturgy and modernity, Pickstocks assumes the current modernist predicament to be stable and sustainable. The system allegedly sustains a minimal subjectivity sufficient to allow the constant reproduction of present relations of domination. But, in a state of increasing normlessness, even this minimal subjectivity would generate motivational crises that would subsequently translate into economic dislocations and eventually become so dependent on the state that it will become impossible to provide the required services efficiently and effectively. At any rate, the constant growth required merely to sustain a capitalist system prevents any kind of lasting stability. The question, therefore, is not whether substantive changes will come about, but what shape they will take. Capitalism may be "compatible with any circumstances whatsoever," but its cancerous *modus operandi* systematically destabilizes these very circumstances and routinely generates instability. Similarly, the reconstitution of relatively autonomous communities is necessitated, not by any extraneous value, but by the need to regulate the system by providing the very conditions for its own reproducibility. Hell may go on indefinitely but, if it does, it is in the form of a cosmic "Twilight Zone" of constant disruptions and unexpected reconfigurations, rather than as pseudo-liturgical stability.

The same goes for Milbank's appeal to a Christian socialism, appended to his otherwise brilliant articulation of "The Politics of Time." Such a projection is predicated on an unwarranted demonization of capitalism, compounded by an idyllic confusion of socialism with a gift economy. Gift economies are viable only within very limited communities, since the immense complexity of this kind of exchange prevents their generalizability to a wider economic context. At any rate, socialism is not a system

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based on gift exchange, but one pretending to provide for a minimal well-being by enforcing equality through an ever growing bureaucratic apparatus run by a privileged professional elite. In a society whose members are autonomous individuals constituted by their active participation in the liturgical life of various organic communities, capitalism would not wreak its usual havoc but, rather, facilitate exchange in unavoidably anonymous settings. The problem with capitalist relations is that they displace gift relations and proceed to systematically undermine the community's organicity. There is nothing in principle preventing the retention of gift relations within tightly-knit communities whose internal dynamics is orchestrated precisely by these relations, while reserving capitalist anonymity for those economic transactions within a wide context. In this case, gift relations need not necessarily translate into the impersonal practices of the bureaucratic apparatus presupposed by any socialism, Christian or otherwise.

This reconciliation of gift relations and a capitalist economy predicated on the viability of relatively autonomous organic communities would be a socio-economic version of Botwinick's liberalization of the sacred, understood not as either a dissolution of theology (in the sense of Vatican II and liberation theology), nor as the vindication of the primacy of liberalism as the hypostatization of particular secular values into fundamental political principles. Rather, it would reduce them to a minimal proceduralist framework guaranteeing the maximum possible autonomy to various porous liturgical communities articulating in a variety of ways their particular traditions. It is no accident that at the dawn of the modern state, before it took a nationalist turn, there were a number of federalist proposals to do just that. Switzerland remains its most successful institutionalization. It was also the original American federal system, before it was destroyed by the Civil War and the importation of the homogenizing managerial ideology of the French Revolution — a secular pseudo-religion whose excesses have long since been contained, but whose spirit thrives in the interventionist policies of the modern state.

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Liturgy and Modernity

Catherine Pickstock

Efforts to find alternatives to liberal individualism and, in particular, problems relating to social fragmentation and the construction of the self have generated interest in a liturgical critique of modernity. The deployment of liturgy as a political category, however, needs to be examined carefully. First, liturgy is a special case of ritual behavior. In addition to designating the commitment of individuals or communities to particular traditions, liturgy occupies a unique mediating position between art and politics, which ensures that the political can transcend its own immediate ends and, at the same time, prevent the artistic from lapsing into a "magic circle" of compensatory realities and merely negative or utopian critiques of politics. Second, modernity has produced a parody of the liturgical, a sort of anti-liturgical liturgy that confirms the dominance of politics and art without liturgy. Third, there are serious problems with any purely secular concepts of liturgy and, in order to develop a political critique of modernity, liturgy needs to be seen as a theological as much as a political category.

Why should the term "liturgical" be preferred over "ritual"? For two reasons. First, as Talal Asad has pointed out, since the 19th century "ritual" has come to indicate a specific activity within a delimited sphere, rather than a pattern of social action.[1] Liturgy does not have this freight of questionable, Western scientific assumptions about a distinctive religious category occupying an isolated superstructural sphere. Second, ritual may denote merely mechanical repetitions divorced from any informing narrative. Consequently, questions arise as to the relation of rite to myth. "Liturgy," however, rejects any myth-rite dualism, because it assumes that as a signifying system

1. Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 55-79.

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a rite is always possible only in terms of its organization around some privileged transcendent signifier, even if this remains mysterious and open to interpretation. Of course, this assumed transcendent can be metaphysically immanent. In this essay, however, since purely neutral descriptions are not possible, liturgy is used as much as an evaluative as an empirical term. While all cultures necessarily manifest the liturgical, those cultures positing something metaphysically transcendent fulfill the liturgical best.

Liturgy as a Political Category

In Plato's *Laws,* the city of the Magnesians is described as more possible than the *Kallipolis* of the *Republic.*[2] This has led many readers to believe that it is a "second best," but more practicable city. As Zdravko Planinc and others have shown, however, such is not the case.[3] The city of the Magnesians is more ideal than the *Kallipolis,* because it is based on the sharing of goods among all citizens,[4] whereas in the *Republic* this is true only of the guardian-class. The highest aspiration of the rest of the population is to mind its own business. How can the "more ideal" also be the more "realizable"? The answer lies in the fact that, whereas the goodness of the *Kallipolis* relies on the philosophers' contemplation of the Forms, in the Magnesian city it is a function of participation in the unity of the cosmos. In turn, the latter reflects the unity of the realm of the Forms and is mediated to each citizen collectively via the continual performance of liturgy. In the Magnesian city, every day of the year has its own specific festival. Thus, the everyday constantly reaches beyond itself in worship. The city is bound together by an extraordinary rhythmic pattern: "the whole city can utter one and the same word," and all citizens "are strung together on a thread of song and dance."[5] At the same time, this rhythm refers the Beyond to nature and to the eternal.[6]

2. Plato, *Laws*, 702c-e, 739c-e, 968b-69d, contrasted to the *Kallipolis* as a *paradigma* laid up in heaven, *Republic,* 592b.

3. Zdravko Planinc, *Plato's Political Philosophy: Prudence in the* Republic *and the* Laws (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co Ltd, 1991), p. 157, 262 and 297 n. 1.

4. *Laws*, 942c.

5. *Laws,* 664a and 653c, respectively.

6. See Planinc, *op.cit., pp.* 164 and 261-2; on the city of the *Laws* as based on the One and on cosmic patterns, see *Laws*, 945d-e, and especially Book X; see also Jacob Klein, *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra,* tr. by E. Brann (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1968); Hans Joachim Kramer, *Plato and the Foundations of Metaphysics: A Work on the Theory of the Principles and Unwritten Doctrines of Plato with a Collection of the Fundamental Documents,* tr. by John Catan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990); Harold Fredrick Cherniss, *The Riddle of the Early Academy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1945).

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These opening remarks about the *Laws* already contain an important clue about liturgy as a political category. The liturgical fuses the most realistic with the most ideal. It is realistic in that all reflective conceptual behavior and thought is grounded in a *Lebenswelt,* which one would have to characterize at least partially in terms of certain repeated rhythms that make reasoning possible and that are themselves without rational foundations. It immediately follows that this reality, presupposed by everything else, has also an *ideal aspect,* for these original patterns privilege certain formations, shapes, sounds or whatever over others. Here lies the origin of unquestioned value or transcendence on which all else depends, even if, metaphysically, this transcendence lies within the immanent realm. It is impossible for human culture to avoid this starting point. In other words, the ideal aspect of human life is not an optional extra, but something essential to specifically human action. To say that human life has a fundamentally liturgical character is a way of recognizing that even the most pragmatic actions exceed themselves by pointing to the unquestioned and the transcendent, which is the horizon within which they operate.

Specifically, *human* existence is liturgical in the same way it is linguistic and social. All cultures begin in liturgy, which fuses the repetition of ideal value with physical inscription upon bodies, places, times and motions. This fusion results in several further characteristics of all human cultures — characteristics modern Western society seems in danger of losing. The liturgical relativizes the everyday without denying its value. Personal joys are not allowed to become over-inflated, because they are placed within the context of communal enjoyment and are seen as but specific manifestations of a continuous communal celebration. Inversely, personal sorrows are shared with others and are viewed in the context of cosmic patterns including such tragic eventualities. In various ways, the pattern itself will allow the individual to see his sorrow as redeemed and transfigured. By contrast, a modern individual may alternate between seeking refuge from public misery in private delight, or escaping personal sorrow through absorption in the impersonal world of the media. In neither case, however, do the public and the private mediate each other in a liturgical fashion: they remain *dirempted.* This situation inevitably gives way to various pathologies. People cannot live with themselves and in public simultaneously. But this co-dwelling is exactly what liturgy makes possible.

If liturgy is able to situate people within a meaningful cosmos, it is also not complacent. On the contrary, because liturgy refers a society to something beyond itself, it can generate an immanent critique of that society in

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the sense that it does not introduce the wholly new and extraneous. Yet, it is *more* than immanent, in that it allows for the disclosure of something different from the transcendent. By contrast, modernity tends to assume that "critique" can come only from the margins and the semi-excluded. This has made many traditional situations almost incomprehensible, such as where the monarch was accompanied by a priest-figure who performed the role of his critical conscience, and yet could not be dispensed with, because he was a channel for the monarch's authority.

Another set of consequences concerns the self within the liturgical order. Characteristically, this self is "middle voiced."[7] He is not purely active, since his liturgical performances made possible by divine forces. Nor is he wholly passive, since his creative subjectivity is necessary to mediate those forces. As Carl Schmitt puts it, he is a *representative* subject, not first and foremost of himself, not self-directed and self-governed. He is first and foremost constituted as a subject by his symbolic, mediating and channelling role.[8] In this way, the self is distanced from himself. It is constituted by a certain openness, since he never perfectly fulfills the role, which nonetheless defines him. This is not the randomly indeterminate openness of the postmodern subject, which is not a really inhabited self but a self-made, perpetually ironic self. To the contrary, the liturgical subject sees himself as having achieved a certain measure of true identity, while what remains indeterminate in his character can be regarded as the ever-open promise of further development, which cannot be anticipated in advance.[9]

The possibility of non-ironic openness suggests yet another way of characterizing the liturgical. This concerns the fusing together of "real life" with "art" or "fiction." From the liturgical viewpoint, this approaches things backwards. The very categories "real life" and "art" are the result of the wreckage of the liturgical. Since, however, this dualism is part of today's predicament, the liturgical can be approached only by unthinking

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7. The middle voice is a grammatical category known to ancient Indo-European languages. It was employed to denote action of a verb that is neither active nor passive. There is some evidence to suggest that its use was not simply to cast an action as either reciprocal or reflexive, but to express the mediation of divine by human action. See Jan Gonda, "Reflections on the Indo-European Medium," Part I, in *Lingua*, Vol. IX (March 1960), pp. 30-67, Part II *Lingua*, Vol. IX (June 1960), pp. 175-93.

8. Carl Schmitt, *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*, tr. by G. L. Ulmen (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), pp.18-9, 21 and 31-3.

9. Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), pp. 198-213ff.

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this dualistic legacy. Whereas art posits "the imaginary" in opposition to "the given," liturgy imagines, e.g., a world of angels seen as more real than the given, a world that holds out the *telos* to which the given aspires and alone defines what the "given" is.[10] The fusion of life and art also ensures that there is no rupture between work and enjoyment.

Etymologically, "liturgy" means "work of the people" and, in a fully liturgical culture, all activities are brought to some degree within the scope of liturgical enactment, just as originally art was not a privileged domain, but referred to a skill or something well made. In theory, this ensures that nothing is merely instrumental, and that every act exceeds itself, since every act becomes an ecstatic celebratory offering.[11] Conversely, all enjoyment is interpersonal and *measured;* it results neither in private disaffection, nor in disillusioned disappointment once the rapture has taken place. Liturgical enjoyment is sustainable enjoyment — one that must be worked at, because it involves certain efforts, disciplines and renunciations. By contrast, in today's society work and enjoyment have been separated in such a way that, very often, work is not a sphere of self-fulfillment, and enjoyment is sought in escape in uncontrolled and unmediated self-expression. This situation was captured by Horkheimer and Adorno in their reading of the story of Odysseus and the Sirens. Odysseus, strapped to the mast, listens voyeuristically to the sirens' voices of ancient myth and ritual — liturgy — enjoying them for a time with sublime pain, like modern art or a drug, while the workers rowing the boat have their ears plugged to keep out any experience other than that of functionality. The implication is that, unlike Hegel's slaves, they are no more capable of emancipatory consciousness than is their master, Odysseus. There is no remedy either in bourgeois art or in capitalist labor, because only the liturgical offers a vision of an alternative that nonetheless can be regarded as a *real* possibility.

Another way of putting this would be to say that only the liturgical holds the ethical and the aesthetic together. In the modern world, the domain of work is not one of spontaneous expression, and it is increasingly drained of beauty. But the world of private free time, which, from a

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10. See, e.g., Eric Gill, *Beauty Looks After Herself* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1933); *A Holy Tradition of Working* (Suffolk: Golgonooza Press, 1983); *It All Goes Together: Selected Essays* (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1944); David Jones, "Art and Sacrament," in his *Epoch and Artist* (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), pp. 143-179; Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, tr. by William W. Hallo (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), pp. 147, 243, 244, 332, 340, 352, 355 and 360ff.

11. Jean-Yves Lacoste, "De la Technique à la Liturgie: un pas ou Deux Hors de la Modernité," in *Communio*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (1984), pp. 26-37.

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liturgical perspective, *should* be the world *most* governed by duty, i. e., the duty to acknowledge the divine, sinks into a world of sham irresponsibility, of voyeuristic enjoyment of crime and violence, drug-taking, and virtual transgression of boundaries. As Aviezer Tucker has pointed out, following Julien Benda, there is a link between the celebration of pure art and fascism, since the artist, as opposed to the philosopher, sees the personal expression of style, the achievement of distinctiveness, as all-important, and will be easily seduced by the expression of this on a large scale.[12]

Given these considerations, today traditional communities governed by liturgical patterns are likely to be the only sources of resistance to capitalist and bureaucratic norms. By contrast, Adorno surely was wrong to invest much hope in avant-garde art, since this is only a sham liturgy. The *mimesis* Adorno saw as characterizing art is supposed to perform an anamnetic recalling of the past that prompts resistance in the present.[13] Of course, this is not simply the past "as past," but the past in its unrealized potential, as Walter Benjamin understood it. Since, however, this recollection and this horizon of the past is unsupported by any participation in eternal forms, at least in Adorno, what one has is only a bastardized, immanentized Platonism.[14] If the desired future is supposed to be anticipated by a past that has not yet fully actualized this future perfection and, like the present, *holds it back* through contradictions and alienations, then it becomes necessary to recollect the past only with a negating gesture in such a way that, as Adorno concludes, the true *mimesis* will be of the unthinkable future.[15] Of course, this tends to reduce art to the minimum, to works such as Beckett's *Endgame*. There are further reasons why Adorno advocated a minimalist art. Since it interrupts the flow of life, for him art is inherently dead. Thus, to take refuge in art is necrophiliac, and tends to prevent one from looking toward a better reality. Although art imitates a future perfection somehow concealed in the past and the present, and is able to gesture toward it in a way conceptual thought cannot, since identifying the future would rationally bring it under present distorted categories, it is nonetheless the case that, for Adorno, the only acceptable art is art at zero degree. By contrast, the liturgical does not

12. Aviezer Tucker, "Intellectual Irresponsibility," in *Telos* 110 (Winter 1998), pp. 181-191

13. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, tr. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: The Athlone Press, 1997), pp. 114 and 118.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 133-4. See also Simon Jarvis, "The Coastline of Experience: Materialism and Metaphysics in Adorno," in *Radical Philosophy*, No. 85 (Sept/Oct 1997), pp. 7-19.

15. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

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have to obey the logic of such parsimony, for liturgy is not like secular art, because it belongs to the flow of life.[16]

When liturgy imagines something beyond everyday life, this is not an imaginary sphere one enters into and then leaves behind, like a dramatic performance ironically bracketed. On the contrary, within the logic of Catholic liturgy, if one goes to the altar, which prefigures the altar set in the middle of the heavenly Jerusalem, then one does so as *oneself*. In fact, one *only becomes oneself* in doing so. Indeed, in doing this, one really does go up to the heavenly Jerusalem. Perhaps it was in order to articulate such an ontologically constitutive liturgical synthesis of the aesthetic and the ethical that in the *Laws* Plato pronounced the liturgical city of the Magnesians to be the site of "the true tragedy." Far from being an exclusion of art, this was a call for there to be nothing *but* art, meaning a *sincere* art or liturgy.[17] To insist on art being liturgical is not to insist that there should be only liturgy and no art. Rather, it is to elevate all modes of art or the category of things made, as Eric Gill defined it. To achieve this is to close the gap between art and life.

For these reasons, liturgy is a far more plausible site of resistance than art. It is also less elitist and allows for positive anticipations of a just future much more than does the dialectical tradition. The problem with the latter is that the future is seen as deriving from the past by a logical process that always relativizes and spatializes both the past and the future, reducing the future to the sum of its parts, which are all the discarded past moments. Dialectics itself, then, remains a mode of liberal progressivism unable to see that different communities preserve living possibilities that do not need to be negated in order to fulfill themselves, but rather need to be taken further by positive acts of imagination.

The protocols of a liturgical ethic tend to prevent accumulation of a capitalist surplus because, as Georges Bataille has pointed out, surplus wealth is expended in public festivals. Yet, Bataille had no real grasp of

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16. Art can *be* liturgical. As Ruskin claimed, art truly fulfills itself only when it is offered as praise. Conversely, if one can have liturgical art, one can also have liturgy as mere theater, as Louis Bouyer has argued with reference to 17th century liturgical practices. See John Ruskin, "All Great Art is Praise," in his *The Laws of Fésole: Principles of Drawing and Painting from the Tuscan Masters* (New York: Allworth Press, 1996), pp. 37-42; Louis Bouyer, "False Conceptions of the Liturgy — Products of the Baroque Period," in his *Life and Liturgy* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1956), pp. 1-10.

17. Plato, *Laws,* 817b; Helmut Kuhn, "The True Tragedy: On the Relationship between Greek Tragedy and Plato," in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Vol. LII, Part 1 (1941), pp. 1-40; Vol. LIII Part 2 (1942), pp. 37-88.

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liturgy, since he postulated the purest liturgy as being a nihilist riot of pure dereliction or wastage, which only interrupted accumulation because it also interrupted work and life.[18] But authentic liturgy is not opposed to work. Therefore, Bataille's analysis only takes the secular refusal of liturgy to a nihilistic extreme. The sacrificial expenditure involved in liturgy is merely one aspect; equally important is the intensification and renewal of those rhythms on which social and economic life depend. The offerings and exchanges to and with the divine that occur in liturgy are the prototypical models for all actions and exchanges between people in a liturgical society. In such a society, work is a gift-offering to someone else or to the community, leading to some counter-gift, some benefit to workers as well. Here patterns of work and exchange tend to move in cycles in accord with the liturgical cycle. Thus, in the High Middle Ages, feasting, the economy, and acts of charity were all closely related. Bands of craftsmen put their upholding of standards under the patronage of saints, and often upheld certain liturgical celebrations. This helped to return the economic surplus to the liturgical cycle. Moreover, the endowment of charitable works and hospitals gave rise to institutions that further promoted ritual circulation. All groups for charitable purposes were also groups for liturgical purposes. This tended to ensure that the bonds of charity bore a ritual weight. This does not mean anything formalistic or impersonal, but rather the reverse. Charity was seen as a holy event, a sacred state of being that had to involve a real exchange and intimacy between the participants. Here it was impossible for charity to be a remote and bureaucratic transaction. If anything, the problem medieval charity did resolve was the lack of fraternal bonds that impaired the life of the potential benefactor as much as that of the recipient. Because the problem of a lack of charity was spiritual rather than material, it could be resolved only in an immediate, highly physical and familial fashion. Restoring charity meant literally the re-establishment of a kinship bond, since all were regarded as the children of Adam.[19]

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18. Georges Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, tr. by Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1992).

19. John Bossy, *Christianity in the West 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 57-9; R. N. Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe c. 121.5 - c. 1515* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 206-34; J. J. Jusserand, *English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen, 1889), pp. 20-3; W. K. Jordan, *Philanthropy in England, 1480-1660* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1954), p. 54; Antony Black, *Guilds and Civil Society in European Thought from the Twelfth Century to the Present* (London: Methuen, 1984); Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 141-54.

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The Refusal of Liturgy

Modernity is characterized most of all by the refusal of liturgy, which is another way of saying that secularization is the pre-condition for a capitalist, bureaucratic and technocratic order, however much this issue may be evaded. Despite the fact that, in some ways, religion survives much more in the US than in Europe, American public space appears to be the most unliturgical. Its cities, with few exceptions, are not centered on cathedrals (thus, in a sense, are not cities at all). People tend to eat at any time; shops are open all night; and every week lacks a Sunday. To be non-liturgical means to have discarded the differentiations of time and space, and to live in a perpetual virtual space of identical repetition.[20] Without the closing down of diurnal activity at dusk, there is no interval before sleep for the descent of angels, no time to relativize man's dominion, just as the red sky of the city hides the stars from our view.

This rejection of liturgy is tantamount to denying the priority of the *Lebenswelt*. Yet, this is impossible, since the *Lebenswelt* is itself the ground of possibility for realizing human subjectivity. There is a sense in which, to cite Bruno Latour, one can never be modern, because modernity must live off the capital of what it denies. In order to recover the *lebensweltliche* base of true subjectivity, modernity has to resort to *artificial negativity* or to the simulation of anti-bureaucratic opposition. In the end, however, this artifice will not be enough. Modernity is locked in a cultural contradiction whereby it requires the very subjectivity it erodes. Thus, the collapse of enlightened centralized states in the East is paralleled by the decentralization of economies in the West, and both foreshadow the end of liberal enlightened despotism.

Does this way of looking at things not subscribe to a dialectical optimism? Is it not a variant of the narrative of progress? First, it is doubtful whether post-Fordist decentralization really paves the way for the re-emergence of organic communities, because allowing a degree of local autonomy is only in the interests of the overall efficiency of the system, just as modern science, unlike Laplacean science, recognizes indeterminacy, but only in the name of a system's overall economy. Second, and much more fundamentally, the denial of the liturgical *Lebenswelt* does not necessarily imply the erection of a world on the impossible basis of pure contextless reflection and contract between isolated individuals on a Rawlsian model. Although liberals talk as if modernity is erected on

20. See Rosenzweig, *op. cit.*, p. 420ff.

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this basis, this is not really the case. Nor is it the case that modernity hovers uneasily between an organic *Lebenswelt* and deliberate contract. On the contrary, in refusing liturgy, modernity successfully creates its own anti-liturgical liturgy, and even a new perverse *Lebenswelt.* What this means is that modernity depends on seamless mechanistic repetitions that no individual can comprehend or even perceive, and that are nevertheless entirely sustainable.

The hidden hand has assumed monstrous and yet self-supporting proportions. Whereas genuine liturgy is mediated by subjective representation and appropriation, and this forms the basis of its non-identical repetition, the modern pseudo-liturgical order bypasses subjectivity altogether and does not feed off a genuine pre-modern subjectivity because it successfully inaugurates a very minimal automated subjectivity to suit its purposes. Literally, people are being converted into cyber-intelligences. Far from this erosion of authentic human subjectivity being threatening for capital, the evidence suggests that the more it eliminates the pre-modern, the more it knows no barriers to its sway. The phenomena of permitted local autonomy and creativity are not really attempted responses to threats to the system. There is far too much survival of an outdated Marxist optimism in such a view. On the contrary, this phenomenon is just obeying an innate technical logic, and it has parallels within the sphere of computer construction and programming. Therefore, it is false to think that capitalism suffers from the kind of non-sustainable characteristic of the Soviet system or that the current problems of an unregulated world market are forever irresolvable in capitalist terms. It is rather that the latter was trying to operate within a less sophisticated and actually *less* technical paradigm, precisely because it still spoke of subjective *planning,* whereas capitalism has dispensed with plans entirely, and lives at ease with a chaos to which it can bend in order to regulate. In other words, post-Fordist decentralization is an innate development of capital. It is simply capital becoming more itself, not capital *responding* to contradictions that threaten its hegemony. Indeed, as Lyotard and others have emphasized, precisely because capital is entirely empty, it *knows* no contradictions, and is compatible with any circumstances whatsoever.

It might seem strange for a theologian to suggest that a sinister system can be perpetuated forever. But there are two important points to be made here. First, if hell chooses to perpetuate itself, nothing can stop this. Second, Hegelian or Marxist dialectical hope is a pseudo-theology, because it hopes that evil will be overcome, not from a transcendent source of good, but simply by the logical unfolding of evil itself. In the

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end, it pins its faith on logic, which is still the logic of liberal progress, and not on something different that would be the vision of the transcendent good. Thus, to deny that a system removed from the liturgical *Lebenswelt* is necessarily contradictory (because it invents a new mechanized, fully-sustainable reality, founded on identical repetition) is not necessarily to espouse any kind of pessimism. For genuinely liturgical modes of life will survive, just as nature will survive, and the transcendent realm of the true, the good and the beautiful is perpetual.

From the viewpoint of the vision of such transcendence, the capitalist order is ontologically less real than is liturgical subjectivity. Therefore, this greater reality is always likely to impress itself on people, since their capacity for true subjectivity can never be eradicated. However, this does not mean that, sooner or later, automated subjectivity is bound to fail. On the contrary, it can sustain itself forever, albeit in a downward spiral. Eventually, it is possible that the system will sustain itself in a cybernetic fashion, beyond anything that can be recognized as true humanity. But one must not confuse technical success with moral or ontological success. To say that this could happen is not to say that it is desirable, nor that it would be an achievement. To the contrary, on the cosmic scale, the success of such a system would just be an increased becoming-nothing, an increased reduction to physically-determinate and fated cycles.

Doubts about the cultural contradictions of capitalism revolve around the idea that modernity has invented a sustainable pseudo-liturgy. Other characteristics of this pseudo-liturgy should be mentioned. First, a genuine transcendence has been displaced in modernity by the fixity of *space.* This is evidenced in several different ways: in the baroque era, in the new sacrality accorded to the monarch and to sovereign power, and also in the emergence of the New Science, with the attempt to force all knowledge into the grid of a spatial *mathesis* in which all the essences of things have a fixed and perpetual place.[21] It is also shown in the structures of modern language, especially in the increasing tendency to substitute static nouns or nominalizations for verbs. These new linguistic patterns are good examples of how, later, uniform spatial power can achieve a much more successful sway through strategic dispersal. If everyone uses certain linguistic forms that assume the absence of time, personhood and government by the same impersonal forces, then policing by an absolute monarch becomes unnecessary, for everyone is now an unwitting delegate of a dispersed, but no less central power.

21. Pickstock, *op. cit.,* chapter 2.

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The same applies to the increasing use of *asyndeton* or syntax devoid of conjunctions and clausal hierarchies, for this gives the impression that the world is composed entirely of discontinuous items without value hierarchies or traditional continuities through time, but which are mere playthings of the forces enshrined in nominalizations. Asyndeton is a good example of sustainable pseudo-liturgy, because the notion of a world of discontinuous items is an unlivable illusion. Yet, this illusion becomes an original reality, because it is instilled through a single remaining continuity and value, i.e., the asyndetic rhythm of speech. Thus, children will take an atomized view of the world for granted, because their *Lebenswelt* is already constituted by asyndetic and nominalized rhythms. One must *historicize* the notion of a *Lebenswelt,* and insist that the appeal to genuine liturgy is not an appeal to the transcendentally inescapable, but to the morally and aesthetically superior. Of course, this superiority can be grasped only by one who has achieved liturgical subjectivity.

In addition to spatialization, another feature of modern pseudo-liturgy is the substitution of civility for ritual, as traced by Norbert Elias, Talal Asad, John Bossy, Stephen Shapin, *et al.* Once the common ritual basis in which the symbolic order is mediated has collapsed, one must do something to prevent misunderstandings and conflicts. Instead of liturgical bonds, which presupposed a shared horizon of substantive conviction, one must substitute codes of civility or good manners that assume only a formal agreement about accepted protocols. Manners are a kind of *method,* and it is no accident that the more pluralistic US is a far more polite place than, e.g., Great Britain, and that peoples' reactions are generally more predictable in the US than in Europe. Alexis de Tocqueville already noted this. A crucial difference between liturgy and civility is that liturgy cannot possibly deceive. If the priest at the Mass secretly denies what he is doing, it does not matter. He has performed his representative function and the truth of the Mass remains. With the emergence of civility in the Renaissance, however, the pervasive problem of dissembling had already become evident. A symbol had ceased to be an unalterable *event* and had turned into a sign that might or might not be reliable.

Whereas previously one could put one's faith in the Mass, which disclosed God's trustworthiness, now it became imperative to put one's faith in other people, even though this trust was by no means guaranteed by the kinds of signs they offered. The only recourse was to protocols of behavior, including binding contracts and signs whose consequences one could predict. Thus, whereas genuine liturgy leads one back beyond oneself, the

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new pseudo-liturgy of civility is its own transcendence and guarantor. One starts to worship style and gentility for their own sake. Shapin has shown how this was supremely true in 17th century England, and how, if there was anything persisting beyond civility, it was now a supposed realm of given *fact.* The New Science depended on trusting the procedures and reports of gentlemen too modest to impose their own theories, but reliable as passive witnesses. Thus, one had an immanentized pseudo-liturgy. Whereas previously the worshipper participated in the truth before which he bowed down, now the scientific inquirer does not participate in the truth he witnesses. There is an absolute contraposition of objective truth and subjectivity. Shapin has shown how this contraposition could be established only through the acceptance of certain ritual codes of behavior. From the viewpoint of genuine liturgy, such codes may appear impoverished and ethically menacing, yet as rituals they constitute a new and sustainable mode of human existence before nature and in society.[22]

The final characteristic of modern pseudo-liturgy is the use of spectacles to sustain order, from the baroque era to the present. Such spectacles can vary from carnival compensations for the drabness of the everyday, to the turning of the everyday into a spectacle. Another reason why capitalism may not suffer cultural contradictions is that it no longer needs a work ethic as it once did, for work itself, as Marcuse noted, can be suffused with token elements of play and eroticism. Thus, although the non-liturgical world tends to separate work and enjoyment to produce purely functional work and purely fictional private enjoyment, today it tends to collapse both. This is not the same as the fusion of work and enjoyment in genuine liturgy, because what it is fusing is a drained, functionalized work with a drained, virtualized and reductively-aestheticized enjoyment. Thus, connecting the two does not restore teleology to work, nor worship to enjoyment. Rather, it reinforces the cycling of both around a black abyss of recycled immanent spatiality.

Today, the diversion of the spectacle is everywhere. But it is no return to the "true tragedy" of Plato's Magnetic city. Rather, a process initiated within genuine liturgy has been brought to its ultimate conclusion. In the Late Middle Ages and in the baroque era liturgy became increasingly centralized and regulated. At the same time, it turned into a theatrical display. In this way, the liturgical world had already begun to misunderstand itself and become a necessary precondition of the pseudo-liturgical.

22. Steven Shapin, *The Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth Century England* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994).

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Why Catholic Liturgy?

Clearly, there are unresolved problems concerning the pure communitarian celebration of the resistance exercised by local organic communities. First, how does one distinguish it from a kind of heightened liberalism in which freely choosing subjects are not individuals, but organic collectivities? Second, while these organic localities may be characterized by teleological practices, it is difficult to see how this will be true for a confederation of such groups. Will not their collectively agreed-upon goals be minimal and, given the degree of divergence, will not the only binding glue be pragmatist and contractual in character? If one deploys the principle of subsidiarity, this does not matter, but if the only common language is liberal, then the universalism intrinsic to liberalism will tend to reassert itself and will press once more toward centralization, even if this remains concealed. Therefore, the spaces of communitarian association in local societies will tend to become *mere carnivalesque* spaces, where people can "play" at having substantive creative and pre-modern freedoms.

This leads to a third problem: if one appeals to organicity from a neutral standpoint, uncommitted to any specific organic community, one's celebration of organicity is perforce merely ironic, i.e., another variant of liberalism in which one merely tolerates the other without wanting to enter into substantive and harmonious association with him. Here, Telos' introduction of Schmitt is revealing. While there is a great deal to learn from Schmitt concerning the primacy of myth in politics, and the contrast between legitimacy and mere positive legality (although, like capitalism, legality without legitimacy may be sustainable), all Schmitt's thinking may be closer to liberalism than usually is acknowledged. His preferences for Hobbes, Maistre and Cortez suggest this, for none of these thinkers is true to the traditions of innate objective equity as found, e.g., in Aquinas. On the contrary, all of them linked the irreducibility of social *mythos* to the idea of God as an entirely willful, arbitrary legislator, i.e., the liberal subject writ large.[23]

This variant of liberalism readily blends with a postmodern nihilism. The only way out of this nihilism is either to embrace some particular local belief-system or to make some claims about a universal truth. Clearly, the latter course is suspect. Most conservative revisions of natural law are not traditional, because they seek to derive universal norms from purely

23. This kind of link led Leo Strauss to notice that absolutism and liberalism are dialectically identical, for both develop a logic of right-to-rule based on the occupation of land. Hence, while Schmitt had unique insight into the way *mythos* lurked behind *nomos,* he was also infected by an entirely modern assumption that the mythical is the arbitrary.

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immanent considerations. If one takes this course, natural law will be just a kind of functionalism or pragmatism. Ever since Ernst Troeltsch, scholars have pointed out that medieval notions of natural law were not like this, since they did not try to deduce norms from universal observable facts, but saw natural law as natural equity grounded in a transcendent eternal law, discernible by *practical* reason that involved a good disposition of the will. Here natural law involved an intimation of transcendence mediated through specific communities rooted in narrative traditions. Following Schmitt, one should be wary of proposals for universal world-government that define enmity merely in formal liberal terms. For these proposals disguise the fact that liberalism is but one more arbitrary myth (or pseudo-liturgy) which, more than any other, is constituted by hatred of all other alternative *mythoi.* Thus, liberal universalism tends to introject enmity and to inaugurate a regime of politically-correct terror and universal suspicion.

Yet, lingering worries that mere celebrations of pluralist localisms do not go beyond liberalism also appear well-founded. Apparently, this is an irresolvable dilemma. Both Roman Law and Catholicism, however, may be able to combine the universal and the particular. Unlike the Byzantine East, in the barbarian West the Church had to provide a legal framework from the very beginning. Yet, up until the 12th or 13th century, the juridical remained subordinate to the sacramental and to the processes of substantive reconciliation exceeding the formality of law.[24] From then on, canon law *itself* started to move from legitimacy to legality, because it had to adopt merely formal contractual norms to mediate various boundary disputes. Yet, Schmitt's work often seems to celebrate this descent of canon law into formalism, because he reads the notion of representation too much in terms of legal correctness and not enough in terms of sacramental efficacy.

Another way of putting this may be to say that Catholicism is superlatively liturgical, because it extends the liturgical tension between the ideal and the real to a new extreme, yet still holds them together. Thus, it links the most remote unknowable and unpredictable transcendence with the most immediate and particular sacramental presentation. It is just this combination that allows the universal and the particular to be brought together. Where the universal is not an immanent and fully-grasped, but rather a remote, dimly-intimated principle, it becomes possible to allow an unlimited variety of different intimations of the transcendent truth in space and time, even though these intimations are not discontinuous with one another. Concomitantly, they must be woven to form a complex tradition.

24. Judith Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987).

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As such, Catholicism is much more tolerant than liberalism. In this schema, each difference is fully tolerated precisely because it is *more* than tolerated, since each difference is a figural repetition of the other differences. Thus, Catholicism has allowed many local rites and variations, and has sheltered much traditional folk narrative and practice. It has been able to reconstrue pre-Christian myths and rituals as figurative anticipations of Catholicism. This may seem like an imperialist gesture, but this figurative reading enriches the sense of Catholicism. Thus, in the legends of the Holy Grail, Celtic ideas of inspirational cauldrons are read eucharistically. This also discloses new dimensions in eucharistic understanding.

There is another way in which Catholic universalism is unlike liberal universalism. The latter is constituted by abstract beliefs which may tolerate earlier narratives and rituals, but are not continuous with them. In a sense, Catholic universal language is a series of narratives and rites that can be linked to local tradition without any abrupt rupture. What is it about Catholic liturgy that makes it universal as well as specific in character? The Catholic rite is free from any exclusions. Simply by virtue of their common humanity, all are admitted to the Body of Christ, without obliterating their differences. The qualification to enter, i.e., baptism, which is open to all, leaves no trace of specific difference, such as circumcision (though that was already a *hidden* trace). After baptism, the water washes away, leaving an invisible transfiguration. The person is irrevocably changed, but only to what one already was. It makes the person *more* himself, rather than setting a barrier between the previously impure self and the new initiated self.

This lack of fetishized boundaries is also shown in a certain removal from sacralized space. Since the Catholic's place is to be before God, and God as transcendent endlessly recedes, this space is one of journeying now coterminous with time. The journey, however, is not an undifferentiated nihilistic flow without articulation, because it is undertaken only with others, and this polyphony brings back a synchronic space, albeit not a static unchanging synchrony. Within such a space, one can again celebrate sacred sites, but these are no longer exclusive. The proper attitude toward them, as Jean-Yves Lacoste has said, is neither one of fetishized triumph, nor of nomadic denial or dispossession, but rather of pilgrimage, which links the sites as beads along a thread.[25] Here, there is no Holy Land, no Mecca, and yet one can find everywhere new and specific hills of epiphany, new and

25. Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Expérience et Absolu* (Paris: P.U.F., 1994), pp. 7-25, 28-48; and "En Marge du Monde et de la Terre: l'Aisle," in *Revue de Metaphysique et de Monde*, No. 2 (1985), pp. 185-200.

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specific Jerusalems: Mont San Michel, where angels roost like birds; Glastonbury, where the sacred vessel was brought for safe-keeping; Iona, where paradise was restored in a Celtic isle of the blessed.

In a sense, the subject of the Mass is at once universal and particular. Similarly, Catholic liturgical space is universal without suppressing regional difference. Within this space, there are protocols that tend to *advert* to a common center only to divert it. Again, this is because God, who is "placed" at the top of the hierarchy, is not really seen as the "highest thing," but is beyond all "things," and so is equally proximate to every step of the hierarchy. There is a hierarchy of priesthood, diaconate and people, or bishop, priest and deacon. At any rate, hierarchy can never can be abolished entirely. If a society is built, as it must, on certain values, some people and sites will embody these values more than others. Since modernity respects power and wealth, hierarchy is legitimated by the mere possession of power. Within the Catholic concept of hierarchy, however, authority is tolerable, because it represents a superior degree of something to which temporally-subordinated people can aspire and attain. Moreover, at the top of the hierarchy is not a *person,* as it came to be for juridically-debased early modern Catholicism, but rather a sign that represents the highest value.

As Nicholas of Cusa emphasized, above the clergy stands the eucharist itself. This means that the Church is only the Body of Christ insofar as it receives the Body of Christ, i.e., receives *itself* from the Eucharist.[26] Thus, authority is not a person, but a sign. Since *all* receive this sign, all receive the Eucharist. The hierarchical principle is balanced by a democratic one, because the necessary expertise of priests and theologians, which guides the laity, must defer to that more inchoate and yet profound sense of incorporated truth residing in the Church as a whole — an ancient Catholic principle revived by Newman and others in the 19th century.[27] In this way, the notion of the in-dwelling of the Spirit in the Church, of the Church as infallible, helped to nurture the democratic idea, but in a non-sophistic version. In this view, truth does not follow the majority. Yet, within an authentic tradition and under authentic guidance, the majority ultimately tends to attract the truth.

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26. Nicholas of Cusa, *The Catholic Concordance,* tr. by Paul E. Sigmund (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

27. John Henry Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine,* ed. by John Coulson (London: Collins, 1986). See also Nicholas Lash, *Newman on Development: the Search for an Explanation in History* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975).

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To some extent, this same qualification of hierarchy in the direction of popular dispersal can also be seen in the very process of the sacrificial offering in the Mass. Normally, in space, sacrifice is linked to rigid divisions and exclusions: parts of the sacrificed animal are given to all, while the smoke alone ascends to heaven to appease the gods, never to return. To the contrary, in time, sacrifice is linked to abandonment of the less-valued, in order to gain the more-valued possession. It could be argued that this logic actually intrudes an element of the theatrical into the liturgical, because the lack of full participation necessarily reduces a sizable number of the participants to mere spectators. The eucharistic process, however, denies this logic and removes altogether the pagan element of theater. This is another reason why one can think of Catholicism as superlatively liturgical: by removing the element of theater that lurks even in most primitive rites, it fuses the symbolic and the ordinary. Bread and wine are offered to God, yet they return from heaven differently, as divinized, and then are consumed in their entirety. The *whole* of this sacrifice, God Himself, is eaten by every single individual without any exclusion and distinction.

Although the Eucharist can be seen as having universal and democratic aspects, it is not a collective event in the sense of some task in which everyone has a part. On the contrary, each individual receives unreservedly Christ's whole body and blood. This is another reminder of dispersal: for Christianity, there is no immanent universal. Instead, the universal is accessible only through the various, specific, time-bound traditional and customary paths. By cleaving to particularity, one can participate in the true universal, which is transcendent and inaccessible. Whereas if one seeks to encompass the universal through an abstracted theory or practice, in disdain of particularity, one irrevocably loses the universal, along with the diversity of the particular.[28]

Can Catholicism provide an alternative both to mere mythic localism *and* to enlightened universalism? To answer this question, it is worth turning to the first two chapters of *Dialectic of Enlightenment.* The most striking feature of this text is its assimilation of myth to enlightenment. Horkheimer and Adorno conceive of a dialectic of myth whereby it is already enlightenment, since in sacrificing to the gods the objective is to control and secularize them. The primitive is defined by subordination of the gods to a fate that can be manipulated. Yet, it also foreshadows the

28. Augustine, *De Libero Arbitrio*, tr. by Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), pp. 49-50 and 67; and *Against the Academicians*, tr. by Peter King (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1995), pp. 167-9.

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modern. Catholic liturgy, on the other hand, provides an entirely free gift, whose only condition is that it be received along with a free offering of this gift back to God with no attempt to constrain Him. This Catholic liturgy truly deconstructs the primitive, yet its distance from the primitive is the same as its distance from the modern. Horkheimer and Adorno describe a dialectic of enlightenment that matches the dialectic of myth. Enlightenment refuses mythic fatality and magical mimesis that seek control by copying. Yet, it can do so only in the name of supposedly objective laws (which perfect fate), and of objective conceptual representation (which perfects mimesis). Horkheimer and Adorno add that the scientific law of a matching reaction to every action perfects the debt accrued by sacrifice and the possibility of a sacrificial calculus. Moreover, if the primitive was dialectically identical with the modern, the real contrast can only be located in the Judaic legacy. One, however, can also locate it in the Platonic legacy.

Horkheimer and Adorno were able to interpret Judaism only in terms of a dialectical logic that is itself both enlightened and mythical. Dialectical analysis is applied to myth and enlightenment, because myth and enlightenment are constrained within an identity logic of which dialectics is ultimately an expression. Outside of this application, critical thought needs to depart from dialectics in the Hegelian sense. Horkheimer and Adorno wrongly sought to conceive of the transcendent in terms of the dialectic. Thus, they opposed the negative prohibition of idols to myth and to the concept that falsely appropriates its object through a claim to be identical with it. This negativity is read in terms of an Hegelian determinate negation which, of course, is still tied to the mythology of progress. Such a translation ignores the fact that transcendence in the Hebrew Bible is manifest as much through ever new and terrifying figures of the divine in nature, strange artifacts and humanity itself, as in the negation of static and manipulable idols. Moreover, for the Biblical vision, the new is not produced merely by a negative refusal of the present, but by the arrival of new divine manifestations mediated by human vision.

If Horkheimer's and Adorno's argument can be freed from its Hegelian dialectical carapace, it is fundamentally correct. Occurring in the middle of history, Judaism and Christianity constitute the real alternative to both the primitive and the modern. One way to understand this is through Jean-Luc Nancy's point that an organic community follows the same logic of the whole governing the parts, as does liberal individualism.[29] Like an

29. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community,* tr. by Peter Connor and Lisa Garbus (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

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atomic individual, a social organism finds its ultimate bounds in self-preservation and self-government. Organic communities generally confirm this logic by locating themselves within an immanent and impersonal cosmic totality, whose fatal logic is just to continue to exist. The only thing that really breaks this logic is Plato's and the Hebrew Bible's intimation of transcendence. Organic substantive legitimation always reduces to merely formalistic legitimacy, so that it reduces its mythic peculiarities to the functional subservience of the repetition of the same. By contrast, transcendence can ensure an irreducible notion of pure legitimation, for here the totality of the community is constituted only through its relation to a supreme personal value, which exists apart from the question of the community's own survival and the persistence of the cosmos.

Just as the Church exists only through its relation to the Body of Christ it receives, so, in general, a community founded on transcendence is paradoxically preceded by its relation to something else — the *arrival* of something else. Moreover, since the transcendent is grasped only imperfectly, it cannot be grasped once and for all, but can only be renewed continually. This imposes an openness to the stranger at the community's very core: not an uncritical openness, nor a readiness to receive anyone on formalistic grounds, but an openness nonetheless. It must maintain this openness in order to be true to itself, because it knows it has not yet become fully itself. Thus, the Hebrew Bible enjoins a specific respect for the sojourner. The founding figure of the *Torah*, Moses, was culturally an Egyptian, i.e., external to the community he refounded.

This priority of relations and openness to new arrivals in a given organic totality suggests a different way of looking at the issue of confederation. Maybe one should not think of federation as something superimposed on pre-constituted localities, as artificial contracts superimposed on natural units. Rather, one should start from the point that communities already exist within complex relational chains, within the overlapping and intertwining of different groups, within fundamental borrowings and integrations of other communal norms, whether present or past. This concept is not the same as that of the liberal nation-state, nor of liberal pluralism, nor of a tolerance of anything whatsoever. Rather, community consists not just in organic solidarity, but also in a specific harmonious blending of differences. This blending is the substance of what occurs within a community. Yet, it is continuous with blendings between communities. Indeed, from this relational perspective, the difference between within and without is relativized.

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In this light, the aim of politics should be both to follow and to promote these relational continuities that constantly interweave a common substantive perspective. Of course, there are conflicts between irreconcilable visions of the true, the good and the beautiful — and other visions could be put forward besides the Catholic one, e.g., Judaic, Islamic and pagan Platonic. But to posit these transcendent realities at all is to deny any ontological and ultimate status to conflicts of human difference, and to presuppose the possibility that they can be modified and integrated in such a way as to be united in a continuous liturgical cycle through space and time. Here there would be respect for localities, but confederation also would have to speak a specific and concrete, if also richly complex language. Confederation would have to pursue specific liturgical — not liberal, abstract and quasi-liturgical — goals. Is not *this* political project the West's very *telos*?

Finally, there are two crucial points that need to be emphasized. First, the notion of the liturgical as a theological category (and not as an exotic word for traditionalism) provides the only real alternative to the anti-liturgy liturgy of modern times. Second, the ideal type presented by Catholicism offers at least one example of the logic of liturgy taken to an extreme, which turns out to be equidistant from the modern and the merely local and organic. Especially in its more extreme form, liturgy manages to reconcile two different things that do not readily seem to go together. First, it collapses dualities of life and art, practice and representation, to produce a seamless whole. The trouble with such a totality is that it can easily assume an organic and immanent form that completely disqualifies any self-critique. In this way, it becomes a pure power-structure, be it on a primitive magical model or a modern technical model. Second, liturgy in its superlative form not only negates the duality of practice and representation, but achieves this negation only by referring the entire social order to a principle beyond itself that continuously recreates this social order in ever different ways. This may seem to erect a new sort of duality. But it does not, because the transcendent here is not the "higher aspect," but rather a mysterious source of that same social reality. There is no fixed boundary between the source and society. Instead, society comes about as a continuously-renewed participation in this source. This suggests that participation in the metaphysical sense is the key to making participation in the social sense possible. Where a community arises by first receiving itself, it is constituted originally as gratitude for a gift of love. Thus, it cannot be seen as a totalized given, or solely as a vehicle of

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power, for in receiving itself it continuously dispossesses itself, but neither in a nihilistic way, nor in favor of an alien code of rules.

This might sound all rather mystical. But it has a distinct practical embodiment. It suggests that, in addition to the non-duality of art and life, one also overcomes the duality of *law* and life, because here order is not seen as imposed as a grid on a given reality, but as mediated through all the different runnels of personal elective affinities that are not closed-off, but always looking to extend themselves. Thus, the social and the authoritative, the real and the ideal are established together only because the social is not seen as a given, but as a gift that arrives from the source of both life and authority. Consequently, all affective social bonds carry within themselves the sovereign power of the principles of legitimation. Without in any way idealizing the High Middle Ages, it is possible to argue that to some degree they did continue to instantiate such a fusion of love and power.[30] By contrast, in later Western history, with the decline of liturgical order and the rise of legal positivism and formalized civility, power has been defined increasingly as a realm alien to love. Concomitantly, love has been relegated to a private sphere, where it has been sentimentalized and confined to the realm of arbitrary affection and whims of taste. What liturgy may provide is a way of aligning oneself with social order, not through alienation toward an abstract law or an organic whole, but rather through the natural turning toward the series of human others.

30. Bossy, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

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The Politics of Time: Community, Gift and Liturgy

John Milbank

Community and Gift

Despite growing uneasiness about the economic and social consequences of the free market, today socialism, like religion, exhibits merely a spectral reality. It no longer seems either plausible or rational, and it has been consigned to the realm of faith. Yet, as with Christianity, socialism still haunts the West because nothing has emerged to replace it. Just as the story of a compassionate God who became a man was seen as the "final religion," so the hope of a universal fraternity based on sharing was seen as "the final politics." With its demise, all that seems to remain is something more secular than politics — a future of infinite utilitarian calculation by individuals, states and trans-national corporations, of possible gains and losses, greater and lesser risks.[1]

Those in thrall to modernist propaganda may protest that such a perspective is false. Allegedly, the problem is that there has been a loss of confidence in the Enlightenment rationalist legacy, to which socialism belongs. Yet, socialism first emerged within the counter-Enlightenment, following the collapse of the promises of the French Revolution.[2] Thus, it sought to reestablish, albeit in a more egalitarian mode, bonds of fraternity and solidarity that transcend merely formal respect for the freedom

1. See Ulrich Beck, *Ecological Politics in an Age of Risk*, tr. by Amos Weisz (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1995).

2. See John Milbank, "On Complex Space," in *The Word Made Strange* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), pp. 268-92; and "Were the Christian Socialists Socialist?" in Jack Forstmann and Joseph Pickle, eds., *Papers of the Nineteenth Century Work Group*, Vol. XIV (1988), pp. 86-95.

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and happiness of others, and that are grounded in a shared vision which the first socialists often assumed to be religious in character. By contrast, the free market, along with a purely procedural bureaucracy, is an expression of an Enlightenment commitment to universality, of the clearly comprehensible and the exhaustively justifiable, since only an empty consistency of method is able to meet these criteria. In this context, debates about the onset of "postmodernity" are trivial. While the emptiness of the modern enlightened legacy tends toward nihilism, attempts to fill the void with modes of purely human self-assertion disclosing a human essence are unlikely to abate entirely.

The question is whether capitalism is the *definitive* shape of secularity, and whether community is an intrinsically religious entity, so that, with the demise of common belief, only a ubiquitous competitive market system can organize and manage the resultant pursuit of self-interest. Such a conclusion has been reached by many on the Left, but its implications are either accepted grudgingly or rejected scornfully. They are accepted by "libertarians," who fully embrace secularism, and rejected by "communitarians," who in some way or other still tend to appeal to religion. There are problems with both positions, since both groups *share* an inadequate understanding of "community."

The most astonishing thing about the libertarian tendency[3] is that it remains more attached to the most metaphysical element of the Marxist legacy, i.e., its fatalistic belief in capitalism as "a necessary stage" in human history, than to its more rigorous aspect, i.e., its deconstruction of the logic of capitalist organization. Thus, it sees post-1970 global neo-liberalization as a necessary and continuing elimination of paternalistic, almost quasi-feudal relics. The new worldwide "revolt against deference" shows that socialists were wrong to assume that the liberal *via negativa* had been travelled to the end. No longer believing that socialism inevitably

3. See Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics* (Cambridge: Polity, 1994), and also, in some ways, Roy Bhaskar, *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation* (London: Verso, 1986). The mistakes of Bhaskar and his followers are 1) to imagine that there are identifiable "laws" more ultimate than the contingency of flux and event; 2) to project "laws" that are no more than the projections of human instrumental reason and its encountered limits onto an imagined "reality"; 3) to fail to see that the social is in no sense a "reality" over-against the subject, since it is the subject, and thus entirely co-terminous with one's endlessly revisable interpretations: the social world *is* both an act of interpretation and endlessly subject to reinterpretations that really alter how it "is" or how it occurs in time. "Realism" spatializes the real, in such a way that the reality of occurrence (time, history) is obliterated; and 4) to still lust after a false marriage of socialism and scientific objectifying reason.

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follows capitalism, the post-Marxist *pathos* of this tendency still seeks little dialectical twists of hope, crumbs of false historicist comfort. While libertarianism insists that the future lies with the isolated "reflective" individual manipulating a plethora of life-choices, it also claims that civil society is sound and that new forms of community are emerging: sport associations, women's support networks, single-issue groups, etc. But all of these, however worthy or unworthy, are rather evidence of lack of community. They are the resorts of people without community, who do not want community. Having abandoned their singularity in favor of an essence — a hobby, or being-a-woman, being-a-black-man, being-a-man, liking to sleep with men, liking a kind of rock music, being obsessed with a particular kind of threatened animal, etc. — they wish to associate with other foreclosed singularities to find mutual support, aid and encouragement. Yet, there is no community here: first, because there is no *difference*, and therefore no encounter; second, because there is no degree of self-sufficiency, of *societas perfecta*, or of potential to survive without outside aid as, e.g., in the case of a family or a parish, which can emigrate, survive and propagate like the Pilgrim Fathers. Here the relation to both space and time is too weak to allow for "community." These are essentially *reactive* groups (which is not to say that they necessarily represent false reactions), often sustaining a mythical sense of victimage. There is rarely much genuine friendship to be found here, because association for *its own sake* — association with the other, the surprising — is not the goal. Rather, it is a matter of input and output, and of a *trade* in mutual support.

The rise of "networking" confirms rather than reverses the historical slide toward individualism. Curiously, when socialists celebrate this, they argue that, e.g., it is pointless to protect the family, because historically it is doomed. Proponents of such a position do not seem to realize or else accept fatalistically that the same capitalist forces undermining traditional heterosexual monogamy also undermine *any* stable relations. Therefore, it is useless to reach for spurious dialectical comfort, and it would be better to recognize that capitalism simply precludes community. This is because it posits the accumulation of abstract wealth as the main goal, to which it subordinates any desire to do anything concrete, including the development of social relations.[4] Where individuals are told to "accumulate," it is not possible to restrict their accumulation except through the rules of a regulated struggle of a *bellum omnium contra omnes*. Where

4. Still crucial is Chapters 1-3 of Karl Marx's *Capital*, Vol. I (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1983), pp. 43-145.

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society recognizes only accumulation as its general imperative, it is impossible to reach any notion of an intrinsically-just distribution of roles, resources and rewards. Instead, a set of rules for exchange between *things*, which reduces them all to fictional entities, will both disguise and organize (as Marx realized) relations of arbitrarily unequal power.

The Left's *purely* libertarian option must part company with socialism. But there are also problems with the Left-of-Center communitarian position. It seems to bask in nostalgia for a state-of-nature that never was and never can be. This state-of-nature somehow combines capitalist market *exchanges* with a compensatory social organicism, to which it hopes the economy can be subordinated. Such a goal it shares with fascism. Community is seen in organicist terms precisely because it is regarded apart from exchange, which always exposes a unit, whether the individual or the group, to an outside, to an exchanging partner. Because community *rather than* exchange is seen to be the final context, the privileged sites of community are quasi-totalizing monads — the family, the locality, the nation. Thus, if libertarians tend to underestimate the importance of *relative* self-sufficiency to real community, communitarians overestimate it, precisely because *absolute* self-sufficiency can never be achieved. Every community exchanges outside of itself, with the infinite unknown.

There are two further errors of communitarianism. The first is that exchange cannot be out-played. It cannot be allowed its rein, like the horses of force and desire in Plato's chariot of the soul, only to be pulled in at last by the communal *logos*. This is a dubious pseudo-Platonism, which sees *the self-governing* unit, whether an individual or a city, as the final context. In fact, throughout nature, all totalities are breached continuously and they are always already breached: they are always involved in an exchange beyond themselves, in an unending chain of exchanges through space and time. For this reason, the organization of exchange is fundamental, and will tend to govern everything else, including every attempt to circumscribe a totality. This, then, is the truth of economic determinism; the priority of what breaches, flows into and out again, thus the priority of both production and exchange.[5] Of course, not all exchanges are necessarily *economic*, nor are they always necessarily formalized legally, acknowledging only contractual encounters.

Nevertheless, in capitalist society exchange *has* been reduced exclusively to economic and formal legal relations. It follows that, since

5. See Michel Serres, *Angels: A Modern Myth* (New York: Flammarion, 1995).

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exchange has an ontological primacy, capitalist market relations and contractual formalism, left as they are, will remain decisive. In other words, if community is not enshrined in exchange — and capitalism is precisely the exclusion of community from exchange — then there is no other social, familial, local or national site in which community can take refuge. Ultimately, families, localities and nations are *in* themselves only exchanges outside themselves. Thus, in a capitalist economy, they are doomed to be undermined, subject to the general process of invention of the "individual" as a supposedly indivisible unit negotiating directly (ignoring family, place and nation) with the invisible market center — that macrocosmic individual who exists to accumulate and to perpetuate the illusion of self-government at a cosmic level.[6]

The second error of communitarians is *shared* with libertarians. It is a certain historical conception of "community" as essentially something that once was, in an organic society of the past — a *Gemeinshaft* that went along with the pervasive ordering of society by religion. Secularization is seen as a movement toward *Gesellshaft*, individualism and individual expressivism. Of course, there is no gainsaying this picture altogether. It can be confirmed in three significant respects. First, community and religion in a broad sense do go together (as Durkheim and so many others have suggested). The claim may be tautological, because community, where it exists, is an end in itself. It is not for anything else and, therefore, as Maurice Blanchot wrote,[7] it is ineffable. It cannot be represented adequately because it is a singular event or a series of singular events. One can only know about it from a vantage-point within, not because it is not expressed externally, but because it is always *that* particular series of expressions grasped from *these* particular viewpoints.

In the wake of Alasdair Macintyre and others, communitarians are fond of recommending "thick" virtues, such as justice and truth, in contrast to "thin" virtues, such as respecting liberty or promoting happiness, which seem grounded simply in mutual self-preservation or in the preservation of the whole society, so that nothing in the community experience is seen as objectively right and just. This perspective does not go far enough. It needs to be supplemented by Blanchot's considerations. To start to *justify* or toargue for thick virtues leads to referring to, e.g., social

6. See John Milbank, "Sacred Triads: Augustine and the Indo-European Soul," in *Modern Theology*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (October 1997), pp. 451-75.

7. Maurice Blanchot, *La Communauté Inavouble* (Paris: Editions du Minuit, 1983).

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cohesion, or the cohesion of the individual (Aristotle does this as much as Locke and Mill).[8] A genuinely thick virtue, a genuine model of social bonding valued for its intrinsic quality, would have to be unnamable and ineffable.[9] Augustine gave it the only possible general name, which is "peace," but, along with St. Paul, he did not take this as something one could contrive or formally plan for. Instead, it is what arises "by grace" as a thousand different specific models of social harmony, a thousand different gifts of specific social bonding, a thousand kinds of community.[10]

These considerations may cleanse concerns with community of the usual reactionary tinge. However, a second respect in which community is both organic and religious must be mentioned. This is the fact that it has nothing to do with *need*. Community must have arisen out of an impulse beyond mere necessity — *either* out of the dark desire of some to possess and therefore make scarce for others and thereby control (as the Church Fathers thought) or else in order to celebrate, in order to *raise supernatural edifices*, and to accumulate in order to expend in offerings and sacrifices to the gods (the raising of symbolic tombs preceded the discovery of agriculture).[11] Most probably, community arose for both reasons. This renders community either rational and sinister, or irrational and most probably sinister. The latter irrational aspect, which never seems lacking in "primitive" societies, renders community always coterminous with a specific *mythos*, a specific narrative without rational grounds.[12]

In a third sense, religion, organicism and community seem to belong together. This concerns the *economy* of primitive societies. As anthropologists have indicated, so-called primitive societies differentiate neither between public contract and private gift, nor between the free active subject and the inert object. For these societies, a thing exchanged is not a commodity, but a gift. It is not *alienated* from the giver, but expresses his personality, so that the giver is *in the* gift, he goes *with* the gift. Precisely

8. Albeit, the former has a richer account of the individual, and assumes that what counts as true self-preservation is in accord with a generally-accepted social norm.

9. Plato, with his notion of the Good as a transcendent plenitude that can be recollected partially only through *ever new* occasions for recollection encountered in a forward movement through time, is much closer to grasping "ineffable community" than is Aristotle. See Jean-Louis Chrétien, *L'Inoubliable et L'inéspéré* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1991) Chapter One; and Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), pp. 3-46.

10. John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 380-438.

11. See George Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, tr. by Robert Hurley (New York: Zone, 1992).

12. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, *op. cit.*, pp. 259-438.

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for this reason, unlike the modern "free gift," a return on the gift is always due to the giver. Yet, this gift is still a gift and not a commodity subject to contract, because it returns in a slightly different form at a not quite predictable time, also bearing with it the subjectivity of the counter-giver.[13]

This economic mode was possible only within tight communities, possessing strong familiarity of blood and tight expectations of what would be appropriate gifts. Despite the definition of the gift as non-identical repetition and asymmetrical reciprocity (such that reception of a gift is *already* a non-identical counter-gift that alone permits a gift to be transferred), the archaic gift sustained the same fetish, the same story of the same cycle of giving through all its exchanges. It moved in an organic circle. For the purpose of trade with strangers, barter or early forms of contact were already deployed outside that circle.[14] However much the archaic gift may be celebrated, the other side of organic collective identity has always been *war* with the other, not to mention the many ways in which gift-giving was used to secure arbitrary power within the clan itself. The gift-community has its own form of violence. The Western historical tragedy is that the replacement of the gift by the contract, which means treating all and everyone as strangers, entails another and equally terrible, though more subtle violence. Thus, to say "gift is violence, but contract is also violence," is the same as to say "myth is violence, but reason is also violence," or else that "community is violence, but lack of community is equally violence."[15]

In the three ways just cited, it would seem that community and organicism do indeed go together. However, this may not be entirely accurate. Consider once again the issue of the relation of community to *exchange*. The entirely organic community is a *self-generating* community. Therefore, it is a community that has ceased to relate to outside bodies. If it treasures community within itself, it can do so only by falling into self-contradiction. As Jean-Luc Nancy points out, community is not *a fusion*, at least not a *complete* fusion, because that just produces another isolated individual totality.[16] To value community is to value

13. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, tr. by W. D. Halls (London: Routledge, 1990); Georges Davey *La Foi Jurée* (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1922); Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1961).

14. See John Milbank, "Can a Gift be Given?" in *Rethinking Metaphysics*, ed. by L. G. Jones and S. E. Fowl (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp. 119-161.

15. See Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, *op. cit.*, pp. 278-326.

16. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, tr. by Peter Connor *et al.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

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encounter, meeting with the other and the different. It is *equally* to value a harmonious sharing and blending (this goes along with "relative self-sufficiency"). If one gives ultimate value to community within a community, it becomes contradictory to set absolute bounds to that community, or to new encounters outside it, within time and space. Thus, the self-governing organic community is already the individual subject writ large, and it is not accidental that such communities often celebrate founding heroes, who are precisely individuals who *broke with* preceding communities.[17] Of course, unlike the modern expressive individual, heroic individuals only express *collective values*. Yet, heroism makes its own actions ultimate, and the same metaphysical logic of *self-government* orders both the predefined individual of antiquity and the more unpredictable individual of modernity. Similarly, the self-government of modern rational society repeats in a formal-instrumental mode the self-identity of *mythos*. This is shown by the way in which individual differences are reduced to quantitative variations and are often more apparent than real. Just as pagan myth-governed collectivities were ultimately individualist, so modern capitalism is ultimately collectivist. It follows that the *Gesellschaft/Gemeinshaft* distinction is a simplification. Otto von Gierke, Theodor W. Adorno and Jean-Luc Nancy are right: in ancient and modern society, pagan myth and secular reason are ultimately in agreement.

Between these two, in the middle of history, Gierke identified something else: the *free-association* or relational unity with the other. Its near-oxymoronic character allows it to be brought into conjunction with the gift, which is somehow at once free *in relation* to, and yet also *bound to* the other.[18] For all its confinement within an organic enclosure, the gift, like a universal portent of the gospel of love and grace, necessarily had to breach this organicism. As Mauss has pointed out, gift already broke with status, and was already a negotiation with an unknown other.[19] It had to be, because any family (given the incest taboo) arises out of exchange with the other, such that organicism is a specifically *patriarchal* illusion, an attempt to expurgate the strangeness

17. See Theodor W. Adorno and M. Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, tr. by John Cumming (London: Nelson, 1992), pp. 3-8.

18. Otto von Gierke, *Political Theories of the Middle Age*, tr. by R. W. Maitland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); *Natural Law and the Theory of Society 1500-1800*, tr. by Ernest Barker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958).

19. Mauss, *The Gift*, *op. cit.*; Annette Wiener, "Trobriand Kinship from Another View," in *Man* 14 (1979), pp. 328-48.

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of wives. As Annette Wiener has shown, working counter to this was the active subjectivity of the gift itself, which meant that women as gifts, far from being reduced to mere objects (since the gift is not an object), exerted in many places an active power of breaching, opening and ushering in exteriority.[20]

Thus, *from the outset in archaic society*, community has been *with* exchange, and gift has been possible, not simply because of organicism, but because there are strangers. Likewise, community *needs* strangers, who are the only available neighbors. It is not that they require to be received *into* the community. The arrivees are always the only people to have community with, though most arrive through time by birth.[21] The problem is how to escape Scylla and Charybdis, i.e., both organic community and alienated contract, since both are models of "individualism," and both exclude community. What could Gierke's oxymoronic "third way" be? It would have to be called the *universal* gift. Instead of even treating neighbors as aliens, one would substitute treating even aliens — when encountered as neighbors, through a universal practice of offering made in the expectation or at least the hope of receiving back not a price due, but others themselves in their counter-gifts. This is because the objective is reciprocity — community — not a barren and sterile self-sacrifice (which is the alternative of *both* nihilists *and* Levinasian moralizers, who take capitalist exchange to be the definitive form of exchange).[22] Such a gift of asymmetrical reciprocity would perforce be universal *mythos*, universal non-identical repetition of the same yet always different story. This would be an all-the-more genuine community, ineffable and not strictly repeatable. By contrast, both traditional organic communities and modern capitalist communities try to hold onto identity in spatial form, in order to define it and store it, thereby *de-sacralizing* it, subordinating it to a self-preservation that ultimately is self-cancelling, since the self is in flux: the "preserved" self logically turns into the postmodern "voided" self. This is why every god has died.

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20. See also John Bossy, *Christianity in the West 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) pp. 19-21.

21. On the fundamental import of "natality," see Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958); *Between Past and Future* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961).

22. See John Milbank, "Sublimity: the Modern Transcendent," in *Religion, Modernity and Postmodernity*, ed. by Paul Heelas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), pp. 258-85 and in *Critical Inquiry* (forthcoming). See also John Milbank "The Midwinter Sacrifice," in *Studies in Christian Ethics*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1997), pp. 13-39.

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Gift and Transcendence

The universal *mythos* would be an alternative *logos* to that of mere reason, which always seeks to produce a final human essence and thereby exercise tyranny, whether as state socialism or technocratic capitalism. The point here is not to appeal to myth and ritual in despair at the failures of reason. To the contrary, one of the merits of Pickstock's work is to indicate the irrationality of a reason that rationally acknowledges no surplus to itself, but instead seeks to be self-sufficient and "pure." Such a reason is doomed to regulate and to preserve inviolate its own void "heart of darkness." Since it is confined by its purity to the entirely formal, methodical and procedural, the content it promotes, and which no formalism can entirely avoid, will assume the form of a crushing demonic ritual, sustaining no point or meaning save its own identical repetition. As Franz Kafka implied, bureaucracy operates not so much as naked coercion, but as a habit of procedure and protocol that is internalized and held captive through the numbing and sterile mystery of its strange futility.[23] Likewise, the market leads to the idolization of novelty as pointless variation, to obeisance before the mesmerizing sublimity of endless quantifiable increase and to a succumbing to the deceitful lure of abstraction. Meanwhile, social life is governed by empty rituals of manners and fashion, which enshrine no abiding sense of the collectively valued. Consequently, they are never to be trusted, since they may always be the masks of insincerity and manipulation.[24] The peculiar characteristic of these three aspects of "secular ritual" (the bizarre "religion" that is essential for the reproduction of the irreligious) is that they all pursue a process of "spatialization." Modern ritual, like all rituals, aims at security and stability, and yet, unlike other rituals, cannot appeal to norms outside its own recurrence and is intended to block all invocation of such norms. Perforce, it must seek to erect an absolutely secure space, immune to temporal ravages. Yet, this is obviously a superstitious and impossible project, more insanely "idolatrous" than anything known to "primitive" peoples. Since the absolutely secure space never arrives, and since, in addition, it commands only form or, rather, commands content only formally (as a

23. See, e.g., Franz Kafka, *The Castle,* tr. by Willa and Edwin Muir (London: Penguin 1971) pp. 60-1: "Again he (K.) had this sense of extraordinary ease in intercourse with authorities. The seemed literally to bear every burden, one could lay everything on their shoulders and remain free and untouched oneself." See also Slavoj Zizek, *For They Know not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 229-41.

24. Pickstock, *After Writing, op. cit.*, pp. 146-9.

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command to be there and to increase), modern ritual also demands a ceaseless and unremitting sacrifice of the past and present to the future, without any traditional "return" of benefit in the shape of an eternal life to the dead or to the living.

Opposed to spatialization stands an appeal to transcendence. The latter, alone, can sustain the "universal gift" mythically and rationally. This is because such a gift must be ineffable, somewhat sacral as to its content, for otherwise it would have no value, would confer no benefit, and therefore be de-natured as gift. But if it is a gift that can be passed on to the unknown realm of strangers or be received from that realm, then this content cannot be circumscribed after the fashion of primitive, local societies. Such a proviso in no sense dilutes the sacrality of the gift, but rather the reverse, since the more the value of the gift is fetishized and confined to a narrow range of permissible forms, the more it becomes self-referring in a mode that is like a kind of concrete pre-figuration of the abstract self-reference of pure reason. Thus, the sacred ineffability of the gift is more sustained where a horizon of unknown variation is allowed, but this horizon can be envisaged only under the sun of transcendence. Only if reality itself is regarded as "given" from some beyond does it become possible to trust that what is communicated and circulated may assume new meanings able to blend seamlessly with the old. Inversely, a reality limitlessly receptive to the renewal and perpetuation of gift, and understood as that which both surprises and unites (surprising to unite, uniting to surprise), must be a reality deriving from a source that is always and eternally the plenitude of such blending.

Is it not outrageous for a political account to appeal directly to the theological (which, for many, represents simply the fantastic and the unbelievable)? No, because the secular sustains an equally "irrational" and yet nihilistic variant of the theological. This variant is but one possible way of universalizing. To be human is somehow to universalize. Yet, spatialization is also the attempt at secure, ideal abstraction, immune from the vagaries of the sensible and the transports of time. As Pickstock argues, and as the French poet Yves Bonnefoy claimed in a slightly different fashion, this drive to the pure concept (or pure *mathesis* for Pickstock) is itself an attempt to evade death.[25] Since all things in time must die, such an evasion also refuses everything finite, which means everything alive. For this perspective, the remembered gleanings of things are but tokens of

25. Pickstock, *After Writing*, *op. cit.* pp. 101-18; Yves Bonnefoy, "Les Tombeaux de Ravenne," in *L'Improbable* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1959), pp. 9-34.

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absence, or else the false consolations of accumulated ciphers. By contrast (for both Pickstock and Bonnefoy), there is another possible mode of universalizing. In this mode, a ceaseless passing and a ceaseless dying is the very condition of life, which allows its dynamic and its development. This further suggests that only an impossible, embalmed, absolute finite life (as sought by spatialization) would be perfectly dead. Whereas, by contrast, what lives is never for a single instant of time or iota of space perfectly alive, but rather always already passed away and transported beyond the given horizon. If life is only the passing of life, its ecstatic memory, then, as Augustine suggested, it occurs only as a sign of an absolute eternal life, as a desire for more of itself that would be more like itself. Since life passes and is only mediated through memory and desire, every concrete instance of life is always also something other than itself, part of a larger, dimly-imagined reality, disclosed only partially.[26] Within this perspective, one must universalize in order to construe (to speak, to live humanly), but here the universal is disclosed in particulars regarded as retrieved as well as lost through death. By the same token, here also the *élan* to the eternal beyond is the same *élan* which leads to the next instant of time, the next step in space, which alone sustains and reveals the preceding step, in expectation of new disclosures from an eternity also reaching down.

A mere myth absolutely irrelevant to practical politics? A *mythos* certainly, as well as a *logos*, but by no means irrelevant. For the problem about pure reason is that it brutally abstracts from all specificity and ineffable detachment. Although its global regime may be sustainable unto delirium, it also destroys the common run of human well-being and motivation. In general, it induces a schizoid cynicism, whereby, as with most modern evangelical Christianity, a very thin and kitsch-laden content is regarded by its adherents almost exclusively from the perspective of promotion, marketing and re-packaging, in order to make it blend forever more seamlessly with the abstractions of virtual life.

There are also problems with fanatical and closed attachments, as all history so readily attests. Today, the incipient self-referentiality of such attachments fuses all too readily with the self-referentiality of abstraction, such that all the machinery of market and bureaucracy may be used to press for the rights to expression of certain identities that are at times little better than reconstructed "heritage" fetishes. One may go somewhat further and insist, with John Gray, on the living diversity of local cultures,

26. Augustine, *Confessions,* Books X-XI, *De Libero Arbitrio*, Book II, p. 16.

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resulting in distinctly different forms of capitalism (Chinese, Japanese, Indian, German, Italian and so forth), but then the question still arises concerning what idiom — economic, cultural, political — mediates these different practices.[27] If one is resigned to mere postmodern pluralism or pluralism *à la* Isaiah Berlin, then what rules at the meta-level is the purest, most spatialized abstraction. It is this abstraction that, as Gray describes, is responsible for the most ruthless and globalizing drive for profits — resulting not just in the destruction of cultures, natural environments, welfare states and labor rights, but also in the inevitable decline of economic demand and the rise of regional over-production. To celebrate even an extra-liberal pluralism — in a Berlin-Gray-postmodern mode, to promote tolerance of non-liberal societies — does not contradict globalization, for it still only allows mediation among diverse cultural visions. As Pickstock points out, this is essentially to substitute free-choosing cultures for free-choosing individuals and, given the sheer cultural diversity of so many parts of the world, this would mean that in practice the free-choosing individual remains very much in the forefront.[28]

Any attempt to restrain the global market would require some appeal to a rival universality. Yet, hitherto, all universalities supposedly deducible from the universally human have issued in the formally empty and thereby destructive, in the form of capitalism or state socialism. Detached from all attachments, such humanisms inevitably end up destroying every attachment for being too tinged with the arbitrary. So one is returned, once more, to the need for at least some modicum of universal attachment, some universal *mythos*. But here transcendence provides a glimpse of the universal not as something clearly grasped, spatially fixed and operable, but rather as something eternally present, yet not fully accessible. This universal is available only as diversely mediated by local pathways. Inversely, it is only by virtue of a local ecstatic opening to this universal that there is giving or community or sacred locality at all. This does not mean that there is an absolutely unknown transcendence, accessible by one's own cultural pathway, each as good as every other. For such a transcendence would then be an uncharacterizable black hole and, therefore, the most perfect of abstractions. Concomitantly, all the indifferently-good pathways would lack any concrete, actualizable idiom for mediation. Such religious "liberalism" would be thoroughly apolitical. Instead, if an open pathway or many open pathways somehow disclose transcendence, this

27. See John Gray, *False Dawn* (London: Granta, 1998).
28. See Catherine Pickstock's "Liturgy and Modernity," in this issue of *Telos*.

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implies that, constantly and dynamically, one is on pilgrimage from sacred site to sacred site, weaving them together and thereby constantly tracing the margins of greater sites out of smaller sites, then returning to locate within the greater realm each specific place once again. In this fashion, a recognition of the transcendent requires not just the legitimating — beyond modern abstraction — of many regional perspectives, but also the constantly renewed attempt to characterize the one human "region" in the cosmos, and to erect, as it were, the universal totem.

All this is *precisely* the endeavor of so-called "axial" religions — Judaism (later Christianity and Islam), Socratic Philosophy and Buddhism — which all emerged around the same time. These movements (less emphatically Buddhism, though this was its tendency *vis-à-vis* Hinduism) all inculcated notions of transcendence. For the Left to understand the political significance of this inculcation, it is crucial that it lay aside libertarian and Marxist biases toward linear historiography. As Marcel Gauchet argues, instead of speaking of "progress" toward global culture, it is better to think of "primitive" societies without the state as *electing* (in some fashion) for an absolute stasis provided by a fixity of ritual and mythic repetition that helps prevent internal rupture, economic inequality and economic scarcity.[29] Conversely, it is better to think of the modern abstract release of political power and abstract wealth as an option for absolute novelty and full realization of all possible human powers. Between these two options, Gauchet locates the axial religions' appeal to transcendence. However, still in thrall to liberal teleology, he is only able (from his *own* option for the modern perspective) to conceive of this appeal as a transitional hybrid, destined eventually to disappear from the cultural horizon.[30] By contrast, a continued option for transcendence suggests another, at least equally plausible historical perspective. As indicated, the "primitive" option ensures a perfectly rational and proto-formal universe unto oneself that tacitly presupposes pure reason, while the modern option erects an even more perfect universe that explicitly presupposes all ineffable attachments to be dangerous and thus taboo. Given such a convergence of apparent opposites, the invocation of transcendence can appear as the *real* alternative arising not at the end but in the middle of history. This timing is, after all, not accidental, because axial

29. Marcel Gauchet, *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion*, tr. by Oscar Burge (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997).

30. See my review of Gauchet's book, "Rendering the Strange Off-limits," in *The Times Literary Supplement* No. 4996 (June 5, 1998), pp. 7-8.

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religions emerged in a period after the emergence of gigantic empires, focussed on a sovereign center. Here it is tempting to associate monotheism and centralization, for indeed the sacral bureaucracy and eminent imperial ownership of Babylon were accompanied by a severe pruning of the pantheon. Yet, on the contrary, all axial religions invented modes of community intended to qualify the sway of the state and its abstractions. Pickstock has shown how Socrates and Plato sought to re-invent the mythical, the ritual, the recollective and the oral in the face of an already secular and "modern" program for sheerly manipulative politics, purely market economics, preferential individualism and cognitive skepticism acknowledging only the drift of temporary power.[31] Likewise, while deploying state thematics, Israel also renewed attention to the ancestral, the oral and the pastoral within her expanded city-state.[32]

In either case, instead of the start of a transition to modernity, there is already a critique of the modern in advance, which re-invokes the primitive, yet not in a spirit of pure nostalgia, since it seeks to be more universal than the primitive. If anything represented such a transition, it was rather the object of this critique, namely the Asiatic empires such as Babylon. Here there was already a secularization of law (compare Plato's *Laws* and the *Torah*) and already extreme penalties for the violation of private property rights (compare the *Torah*'s focus on the sundering of intra-human bonds). These institutions were correlated with a theocratic absolutism and a simplified pantheon tending toward monotheism. This was because the sacred had been increasingly understood as a source of power that could be channelled and manipulated by a codified divination. Outside this imperial monopoly of the sacral, a drained and thereby "secular" sphere started to emerge. Indeed, without such secularization, theocracy is inconceivable, since a theory which limits rule only to a sacral class with a monopoly on divine mediation *requires* a distinctly secular sphere over which to exercise this authority. However, where access to the divine is mediated throughout by an elusive participation (as in Athens and Israel), the secular is less distinct, and theocracy finds no scope for its peculiar logic. As Pickstock emphasizes, the emergence of theocratic "divine right" theories based on a *de facto* channelling of divine will and power through a sovereign center,

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31. It should be remembered that the *polis* was *already* in some measure a reaction against empire and "more archaic" in the role it allowed oral participation as against written decree. See Pickstock, *After Writing*, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-46.

32. See John Milbank, "History of the One God," in *The Heythrop Journal* (October 1997), Vol. 38, No. 4, pp. 371-400.

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rather than on an elective participation in divine practice that occurred at the end of the Middle Ages, went (with seeming extreme paradox) hand-in-hand with secularization. At this time, a "Babylonian" pattern of monotheism re-asserted itself in a fashion manifestly subversive of prior Christian and Jewish construals of God and community.

In light of these considerations, the Western legacy can be reappropriated, not as the history of an evolutionary progress away from religion and toward human freedom and control, but as the history of a tremendous *revolt* against either particularism or the cult of universalizable power, in the name of the transcendent Good. Capitalism represents the gradual collapse of this revolt; socialism (in its more syndicalist forms), the attempt to renew and intensify it. If the creeds of transcendence in the West (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) are expressions of this revolt, then it is absurd to regard them as local cultic preferences in contrast to universalizing reason. Rather, they represent a mode of universalizing other than the Enlightenment's, and one that, since it is more respectful of the particular and the ineffable, holds more promise of a distributive justice enacted through consent rather than through terror and forced purchase. Yet, the precondition for such agreed distribution remains some mode of universal religious attachment, some collective totem. Thus, Western religions have focussed on symbols, practices and authorities utterly specific, yet also moveable and transferable from culture to culture, and variable from place to place. Of course, the problem is that they provide rival versions of a "universal totem." This is a problem not readily resolvable, though the degree of overlap in symbolic as well as conceptual consensus is also considerable. Pickstock has provided an exemplary account of how one "universal totem," i.e., the Catholic Eucharist, operates in a fashion that is at once entirely tangible, yet equally non-fetishistic and non-socially divisive. She has also shown how, when such a totem becomes *merely* portable (as with the Protestant bound and unvarying Bible, or the Counter-Reformation regulated and unvarying Mass) and loses local variation along its journey, it tends to become once more a fetishized object that is increasingly a pretext for the rule of fetishized abstractions. This is the fate of all "fundamentalisms."

Pickstock's analysis of the social relevance of the Catholic Mass cannot be ignored, because the pre-condition for collective solidarity and just redistribution beyond liberal formalities of respect for person and property must be a kind of collective and supra-rational devotion. All societies retain some such devotion. But where it is marginalized, it tends to become debased and fanaticized, such that, should it ever erupt again (at

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once protesting and yet reinforcing the lack of true liturgy), the consequences are likely to be (and have been in this century) diabolical. For this reason alone, the matter of collective devotion must be one of general political concern. Moreover, such devotion can never be conjured up *de novo*. It has to be related to a given inheritance. Pickstock points out that the first source of European collective identity was simply the sense of being literally part of the body of Christ — an extension of divine humanity.[33] This has left a unique legacy, a conviction of the possibility of limitless human exaltation, absolutely qualified by an equal conviction that such an exaltation is an attentive reception of something utterly different from the human. Is this legacy uniquely valuable, or could it have been ensured by any other imagery or ritual? What is so striking about European collectivity is that it is imagined as constantly and entirely reconstituted from without: the body of Christ is what must first be received and then received again. As a result, ultimate authority resides not in a person, or institution, a legal norm within the community, or in the community as a whole, whether as majority or general will, but rather in sacramental symbols standing for a moment over against the community and judging it. Moreover, this symbolic power is not primarily mediated by a human hierarchy. On the contrary, it is mediated by the collective ritual ingestion of these symbols throughout history. Thus, in terms of this model, community is not self-governing, and yet its government by the transcendent other is mediated through the gradual emergence of a complex consensus not just in contemporary space, but in all generations over time.

The Politics of Time

The "Body of Christ" involves something much more politically complex than conventional notions of "democracy," "civil society," etc. In particular, it suggests a *politics of time* with respect to the usual questions of who should have authority and freedom within a circumscribed *space*. This politics of time has several aspects.

First, the politics of endless acquisition and deferred enjoyment in expectation of an absolute future rest on an illusory ontology which seeks to erect a secure spatial edifice in defiance of death. Instead, a politics of time would treat life only as a passing, and focus on how it may do so gloriously. Thus, instead of the sacrificial cult of instrumentalization that portrays various activities such as education, journeys to work, technology,

33. Pickstock, *After Writing*, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-66.

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administration, communications, etc. as processes to be endured in order to reach valued (but increasingly elusive) ends, it is preferable to focus on the cyclical "pointlessness" of life (eating to work, working to eat, etc.) and then consider this very "pointlessness" the point of life, a kind of dance to be performed well, as if for the delectation of the gods. As Pickstock explains, this is how Plato finally conceived the life of the city.

Second, a politics of time would insist on the priority of the other-worldly as the pre-condition of justice. For the secular Left, this is the hardest crux of all. Yet, it is easily explained. It has nothing to do with the other-worldly as something opposed to the world-in-time. It was only after this world had been reconceived as a sacrally drained, unyielding space, that the church became more exclusively concerned with the fate of the individual soul in another dimension.[34] By contrast, a reality seen as passing tends to be thought of as permanently invaded by an elsewhere it mediates, since what passes can be seen as ultimately valuable only for what it portends. Of course, such a perspective can lead to an Oriental neglect of the political and the social, or can be used ideologically to placate the dispossessed. As Augustine insisted, however, this need not be the case where what passes is allowed to pass well, and where one rejoices in its passing, since only such passing allows the construal of the world as a continuous theme.[35] Here the ephemeral is celebrated, but not as something that can be possessed or accumulated. If not deployed selectively and ideologically, the latter realization removes the entire *raison d'être* from the desire to possess and accumulate, since it reveals this aim to be illusory and impossible. Thus, whereas a secular socialism appears to withdraw from egotism reluctantly and grudgingly, as if it sought to prevent some people from holding too much of the *genuinely good*, religious socialism, with far less austerity, insists that only what is in common is truly good or can be truly possessed, though only in the mode of reception of a gift, which must be relinquished and passed on. Moreover, this common good — the wealth of being that passes like a flash of light[36] — is enjoyed from different perspectives as something absolutely individual and unique, whereas a limited spatial good shared equally is supposed

34. Pickstock, *After Writing*, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-58 and 158-66.

35. Augustine, *De Libero Abitrio*, *op. cit.*, Book II, p. 16: ". . . do not doubt that there is an eternal and unchangeable form that sees to it that these changeable things do not perish, but pass through time in measured motions and a distinct variety of forms, like the verses of a song."

36. This set of considerations is discussed with complex brilliance and allusion to the metaphor of light by Augustine in Book II of *De Libero Arbitrio*, *op. cit.*

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to grant a portion of the same thing to all. In other words, where what is "in common" is seen as metaphysically and truly in common, collectivity is thought to arise through the uttermost individualism, just as the transcendent universal is only available through local and specific refraction.

Third, a politics of time rejects the inevitable secular oscillation between humanism and nihilism. In the former case, the criterion of autonomy may often place restrictions on coercion, on the idolization of false, supposedly external absolutes, and on inequitable inconsistencies. Yet, the same autonomy, with an implacable logic, eventually tends to turn into the terror of collective and majority force, the idolization of human freedom whatever its elections, and the absolute rightness of whatever legislates without exceptions. Here it is not enough to accuse Adolf Eichmann of perverting the "without exception" of the Kantian categorical imperative into the "without exception" of consistently administered state law, whatever its content, which in this case was genocidal.[37] For Eichmann was more right than he knew: Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals* makes it clear that the "without exception" of submission to sovereign state power is endorsed by the "without exception" of the categorical imperative, as it cannot be willed *universally* that outraged individual consciences should remove the very source of political legal order.[38] Since Kant sees this order as legitimated by its proceeding from free autonomy, it is impossible to appeal to any "natural" norms or restraints (as in the Middle Ages) over against the *de facto* exercise of sovereignty. Thus, Kantian liberal humanist logic and Nazi logic are seamlessly linked,[39] and Nazism was nothing but an unhindered attempt to raise man to the level of a god, to unleash and perfect the power of human freedom. Yet, such pure humanism also slides into nihilism. With too great immodesty, free will may be seen as surmounting fate, and yet with too great modesty this same free will may often be seen as but the manifestation of fate, the temporary instance of a blind power as much denied as manifest in its instantiations, which are therefore destined to disappear. Both these faces of the secular

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37. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (London: Penguin, 1992), pp. 135-7.

38. Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, tr. by Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 129-33.

39. See Jacob Rogozinski, "Hell on Earth: Hannah Arendt in the Face of Hitler," in *Philosophy Today* (Fall 1993), Vol. 37, No. 3, pp. 14 and 257-74. Rogozinski cites Hitler to Rauschning (267): "I am founding an Order, that of man as the measure and centre of the world, of the Man-God . . . a splendid figure of Being [who] will be like an image to be worshipped." Rogozinski comments: "In other words: Nazism is a humanism."

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equally eradicate time, since humanism seeks an impossible defeat of time and death, while nihilism celebrates time as pure destruction, and therefore as the spatial void which overrides time and reduces its instances and differences to unmeaning. The first face — humanism — denies the inherent nothingness of temporal things, while the other face — nihilism — hypostasizes this nullity. In its perverse theology, apparent presences are seen as primitive denials of the *nihil*, through which the *nihil* nonetheless is manifest. By contrast, only the orientation to transcendence, to the eternal, interprets the intrinsic nothingness of things in time as their existing by participation, as their subsisting always and primordially as gifts announcing ever-renewed and freely-granted human possibilities.

In proceeding from this vision, which regards all temporalities as nothing and yet as the way to everything, a politics of time is able to outwit both the immodesty of autonomy and the false modesty of abandonment to fate that places limits on the chances of human reconciliation, and encourages only a free-market play of transhuman forces. Thus, a politics of time, construed as grounded in liturgical devotion, is able, as Pickstock suggests, to inscribe heteronomy in the heart of autonomy itself. Where what rules is a deferral to a plenitudinous unknown good always still to arrive, rule itself is (at least in principle) understood as the possibility of a self-critique through attention to what lies beyond the self (individual or collective). Pure autonomy must elect some facet of self arbitrarily as essential and inviolable, in order to refer to this as a measure. In this way, it collapses into heteronomy. But liturgical rule is able to await further capacities of the self as yet undisclosed or ungranted. At the same time it does not appeal to any finite, hypostasized, heteronomous principle. On the contrary, it is precisely as a new disclosure of the self that the rule of the transcendentally heteronomous will be registered.

All this may sound abstract and removed from practice. Yet, it is not, because social justice and political democracy require absolute self-criticism, as well as an avoidance of absolutization of the self making this criticism, since this will lead to the fascist worship of will or fate. Further, it will lead to attempts to enact a formal divine judgment in the here and now in order to produce a utopian "heaven on earth," whose corollary will necessarily be a "hell on earth" to which all those tinged with imperfection will be condemned.[40] It seems that only a culturally-imbued sense of transcendence is able to sustain this balance between self-critique and

40. On these grounds Jacob Rogozinski has demonstrated that the holocaust was the supreme consummation of secularity. See Rogozinski, *op. cit.*

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non-absolutization of the self that is self-critical. From this sense and from this balance flows a valuing of time, since future contingencies are no longer subordinated to the eternal spatial measure of human arbitration or ultimate vacuity. Within the scope of the latter measures, these contingencies are reduced to random instances. But for a politics of time, what is still to come may disclose more of what is eternal, beyond both time and space. For this practice alone contingency partakes of ultimate and not subordinated significance. Here, nevetheless, a caveat is in order: were the future contingency to arrive through time alone, it would be seen merely as another manifestation of the same thing, already given, like a flower issuing forth from a shoot. However, where it also arises from another space, or from a space forever constituted by externalities (unlike the utterly finished, surveyable space of a *mathesis*), it is guaranteed that the future contingency is superadded to the present — not emergent from it by mere instrumental causality, whose absolute sway would demand that everything was given from the very first instance of time. A non-foreclosed space is also required for the temporal arrival of significant contingencies (just as the genuine externalities of this space only appear through the open-endedness of time), like the endless variations of tidal waves upon a shore. Therefore, Pickstock is right to insist on a liturgical *chronotope*, not upon a triumph of time over space, which, as she says, would be but another mode of spatialization.[41] (Another way of conveying this is to say that exchange is as fundamental as production).

A politics of time seeks, first of all, to ritualize life as passage, in order to capture in this passage certain traces of the eternal. In this fashion, it is fundamentally *liturgical*. Secondly, it insists that this eternal alone is what is possessed individually, and possessed in common, like light, which is seen collectively and yet from individual perspectives. Thirdly, it recognizes that government by the eternal is at once heteronomous and autonomous: "middle voiced," as Pickstock puts it. More concretely, these three components can now be recognized as festival, education and profession.

Three Modes of Liturgy

First there is the *festival*. Where life is realized and enjoyed as passage, there wealth lies in glorious expenditure, and personal freedom in acts of generosity that bond one to others. Such a passage is a passage of gift which, as Pickstock says, cannot begin or cease to be gift, if it is ever to be given at all. This is because a thing given is regarded as always having had

41. Pickstock, *After Writing*, *op. cit.*, pp. 233-8.

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this fundamental destiny, if the recipient is not to be devalued, while a gift must go on giving itself, if it is not to lapse into mere possession, in forgetfulness of the donor. Thus, life celebrated as passing gift is life thankfully received from the outset, and life shared without restraint. Here doxology and charity are inseparable, but consummated in the shared festival, for to obliterate oneself as recipient is to blaspheme the transcendent giver, while to refuse the return gift of gratitude from the one to whom one gives is to celebrate one's will to give (in Kantian, Levinasian or Derridean mode), instead of the miraculous and unpredictable arrival of achieved affinity and surprising reciprocity. Pickstock restores the full dimensions of charity as celebration, kinship, fraternity, eros and ritual.[42] From this perspective, charity ceases to be an anxious duty, just as bereavement ceases to be an unmediated private loss. Instead, to give has its seasons, and loss its place in a general economy, although neither in an exhaustively-prescribed fashion. Therefore, giving is primarily a matter of shared expenditure and celebration.

"Primitive" societies knew this, and accordingly grouped themselves around such ecstatic transition, rather than accumulated illusions. In modern societies lacking a collective understanding of why things pass (from whence they come and to where they are going, out of apparent night through a single day and back to night) and lacking a public celebration of this passing, there are increasingly no public, central spaces — marked by tombs ornamenting death, and towers narrowing upwards.[43] Without collective mourning and collective offering, no sufficiently extravagant public works are erected out of limitless and exorbitant demand, like the massive stone circles of the Atlantic seaboard erected (most probably) through the cyclical co-operation of tiny adjacent chiefdoms.[44] As Bataille argued, only such works ensure any sufficient brake on the private appropriation of capital, since merely pragmatic public purposes are too finite in scope to absorb the insanely infinite stockpiling of credit. However, as Pickstock rightly avers, Bataille was wrong to postulate the secularity of all production.[45] Instead, where the smoke of offering does not vanish into an abyss, but ascends to a plenitude that receives it and ascends with unquenchable hope of future benefit, there it will be seen

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-57.
43. Bonnefoy, "Les Tombeaux de Ravenne," *op. cit.*
44. See Colin Renfrew, *Before Civilization: The Radiocarbon Revolution and Prehistoric Europe* (London: Penguin, 1973), pp. 161-82.
45. Pickstock, "Liturgy and Modernity," *op. cit.*

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that every production, just to the degree that it is produced only to be lost, expended and offered, nonetheless exhibits in its specific lineaments the benefits of participation, of further received gift. Here there is no real contrast, as with Bataille's (conventional) nihilism between holding and losing. On the contrary, if what is held must be lost, it is also true that this losing is an increased self-expression, allowed by the transcendent as the most that can ever be held. Thus, the Pickstockian notion of "liturgy" adds to the current thought of "gift" an equiprimodiality of work and production with exchange. Liturgy is an offering, a kind of spontaneous, non-regulated taxation. But it is also "the work of the people." Therefore, it is both the occasional riot of festival and the steadiness of everyday craft: festival *as* craft, and craft *as* festival.

Next comes *education*. Within a spatialized politics (common to both Right and Left), it is assumed that education is only a temporal instrument that subserves a spatial outcome at once political, social, economic and technological. Broadly speaking, this makes education but one field within the space of the political. However, from the perspective of a politics of time, the political (and the social, the economic and the technological) is but a moment of the pedagogic. This is because the point of human life is ultimately taken to be *theoria*, the contemplation of the eternal. Therefore, the whole of life is regarded as a reception and a learning. From this perspective, education falls within a liturgical economy. Concomitantly, if life is a pedagogic reception, then it is also a pedagogic transmission: freedom, here, must first of all be the generous imparting of what one has learned in order that it might be learned better. This, however, is a primary pedagogic mode of sociality that (like the body of Christ) is very hard to specify under the usual spatialized "political" categories. Clearly, education can never be democratic. This was Socrates' subversive realization, beyond any subversive thoughts normally available to the Left. The singular uniqueness and contingency of wisdom is unable to subordinate itself to any majority. If one is to learn, one must first submit. Likewise, if the past (as Edmund Burke demanded) is to be given a "democratic" voice, one must first yield blindly to tradition before one gains insight into its logic or a capacity to modify it. Thus, certain modern pseudo-radical phenomena, such as "student rights" and "children's rights," are evidence of an understandable perplexity that spatialization never completes a sway supposed to be exhaustive. At the same time, they are testimonies to an inherent limit of this project, which exposes its final absurdity.

If education is not "democratic," it is also not "hierarchical" in the

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usual (but debased) sense of something fixed. The initial hierarchy involved is self-cancelling in the sense that the aim of a downwards transmission is to raise up the one beneath, and ideally beyond one's own height. This pedagogic rhythm of self-cancelling hierarchy is far truer to a fundamental human ontology than are merely political arguments about how space is to be shared and administered, as though it were a given surveyable fixity, occupied with equal intensity. It is not just in school that learning first takes place, and then, perhaps, one overtakes one's teachers. On the contrary, throughout life it is necessary to attend, to receive, to submit and also to learn to recognize when one must receive in turn from those who once were one's students. Therefore, a "democracy of time" involves not levelling, but complex cycles of exaltation and abasement.

Given this circumstance, it is absolutely impossible that education can ever (in the most fundamental sense) be "politically" organized. No "majority" can decide what form pedagogy should take, since this majority is only the outcome of a certain pedagogic process it can never control. Therefore, democracy, in the usual spatial sense, should never govern education, since education *must* govern democracy and determine its quality. Every time the government inspectors arrive (as they increasingly do) at schools, colleges and universities with their spatialized check-lists, they should be sent back. Instead, schools ought to send their own emissaries to assess the government according to the (inexhaustible) canons of eternal wisdom. Indeed, it is only the educated who can determine to what degree, at any one given time, a spatial democracy should operate. For as St. Augustine argued, democracy is only a just arrangement where a majority of people have been educated into wisdom and virtue.[46] Of course, under a Christianized understanding of wisdom as love, and of truth as something infused throughout the social body by the Holy Spirit (such that it is always likely, on the whole, to prevail), the biases against elitist rule and in favor of majoritarianism become much stronger than for the ancient Greeks. The point is not to question the formal mechanisms of democracy, but rather to insist on the priority of a pedagogic culture that will sustain and extend them. Otherwise, a corrupt majority will yield, not to the sway of good teaching, but to the lure of manipulative propaganda. For "propaganda" is the debased evidence of pedagogic primacy when this primacy is questioned. Likewise, inescapable hierarchy does not vanish when its value is denied, either by the Left or the Right. Instead, in the absence of any sense

46. Augustine, *De Libero Arbitrio*, *op. cit.*, Book I, p. 6.

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of hierarchy as initiating into truth, and as self-cancelling, one gets all the more rigid and spatialized hierarchies in which those who lead do so by chance, by opportunism, by possession of capital, by their ability to seduce and, most often, by sheer force of acceptable stupidity and mediocrity.

But education, if it is not governed by a majority is subject . . . to what? To reason? Clearly not this alone, since, before one can reason one must receive a tradition and one can never quite comprehend this foundation. Clearly, not reason alone, if education seeks above all to know and to inculcate the good life or the ineffable basis of community. In fact, education seeks, almost impossibly, to discover and to transmit this ineffability. Therefore, if it seeks to frame universal concepts, it also seeks to shape the universal totem. Education obeys a liturgical rhythm that can be denied only in the mode of distortion.

Finally, there is *profession.* Where the transcendent governs, it does so neither autonomously nor heteronomously, but rather through an instilled sense of right patternings, shown in examples and repeated by skill. Education should be about nothing but this instilling, such that it can occur only within a liturgical *polis* in miniature, just as the *polis* at large is a macrocosmic academy. As Plato argued, where a populace is instilled with the right modes and rhythms, there is little need for written laws: his was the true, ordered anarchy.[47] Thus where devotion to transcendent value is instilled, one has the possibility of self-regulation that necessarily includes an internalized sense of the role of practice — technical, medicinal, pedagogic, economic, artisanal, etc. — within the wider society. One can call such devotion, such virtue, "professionalism," provided one prescinds from some of the usual connotations of these words, possessing a bureaucratic flavor. If one is a member of a profession, then one's education ensures that one does not, for the most part, understand self-interest in a sheerly base or even purely egotistical fashion. To take the example of medicine: normally medical doctors (at least in Europe) do not pursue money alone, because they would despise themselves, and others would despise them, if they did so. Since Hippocrates and until very recently, there is no pure medical egotism, for it is not that the doctor ironically withdraws from what he does in order to cash in his performance as abstract wealth or prestige. No, he goes with what he does, becomes the gifts he bestows; this

47. Augustine added that coercion only becomes necessary when people turn away from common, "educational" goods to the false goods of possession; for his perspective, state punishment is benign since all it need threaten is the removal of such illusory goods and a re-education into the truth. *Ibid.*, Book I, p. 15.

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generosity *is* himself, not an ego, but something expended if it is to be renewed. In return, society provides him with what he needs in terms of instruments, prestige, material well-being and leisure in order to be a giver in this specific mode. Thus, as Marcel Mauss rightly argued, the idea of the profession continues to be bound up with the notion of the gift.[48]

In this light, it is possible to grasp the profound significance of today's capitalist *de-professionalization*. In every realm — first of all manufacturing and retail, but then management, medicine, education (at all levels), science, technology and finally politics — the same pattern pertains. Innovation becomes the prerogative of a few, and even their brief is mainly functional manipulation, while beneath this level no one is to be *trusted* any longer. Instead, they must be assessed against a spatial check-list of routinized procedure alien to all genuine inculcation of excellence. Trust is now impossible, because, as Pickstock has shown, public trust depends on publicly accepted signs charged with a liturgical depth. Substituted protocol, by contrast, requires additional confirming protocols: the bad infinite of inspection tending inevitably to the terminus of a new terror. Thus, today, all temporal pedagogic procedures that can never be regulated through economic supply and demand are subject instead to voracious bullying and policing: the application of rules and nominal requirements that must be renewed. Yet, the irony beyond terror is that a spatialized check can only deliver an *appearance* of conformity, since the real proof of performed excellence is already past, or else will be shown up only in the future. Ironically, only the self-judgement of the professional under transcendent norms *could* ever be reliable.

If one mark of contemporary market and state extremism is deprofessionalization, then may not this suggest that an extension of the instance of "the profession" is a crucial and at least potentially practicable possibility for left-wing politics? Central state planning, regarded as the main vehicle for socialism, clearly has failed and, in any case, it is an archetypal spatializing *mathesis* doomed to misrepresent and distort temporal and unmappable processes. The alternative vehicle is some mode of syndicalism or co-operativism. The problem here is to mediate relations among independent co-operative institutions since, given merely market mediations, a non-subordination of workers' shares to profits will not be matched by the non-subordination of fair prices to profits. Moreover, given the necessity of hierarchy for production, it remains likely that a

48. Mauss, *The Gift*, *op. cit.*

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managerial and then capitalist elite will re-emerge. Therefore, what is essential for syndicalism is some kind of professional ethos, as recommended by John Ruskin and the guild socialist tradition — some sense that what is produced is primarily a gift to the community that will relate to community values in crucially important ways. Thus, all members of a group of producers, retailers or traders should first be initiated into a certain *mystique* of their calling — a certain professional pride in a mode of operation and an upshot which harmonizes with the ineffable meaning of their whole society. Here, once again, the dimension of time would be restored, since all initiates would cease to value the mere amassing of abstract wealth. Instead, they would see themselves as inheriting, developing and transmitting a particular skill requiring certain "gifts" for its best exercise — gifts offered for the wider manifestation of human *charisma*.

Where the product is also regarded as a gift, then, of necessity, internal syndicalist cooperation must be linked with a wider economic collaboration. Of course, a free market would remain. However, the point for socialism is not (at least primarily) to "limit" the market, but rather to reconfigure exchange according to the protocols of a universal gift exchange, i.e., in every negotiated transaction, something other than profit and loss must be at issue. At every turn, at every specific point of economic interaction, the exchange entered into must also represent what here, and in relation to everything else, is held to be justice, a truly shared benefit and a bonding as well as a division or exchange. Without doubt, these no longer purely "economic" exchanges, though encouraged by every inner-syndical ethos, also need to be overseen by co-operative banks and financial courts (consisting of both business and government representatives) that would advise continually (and in extreme cases legislate and execute) on the range of fair prices, fair profits and fair capital returns.

Naturally, this is idealistic, but not utopian, since it is grounded on the notion of education into virtue extended into guild regulation. Moreover, many more mitigated capitalisms all over the world already sustain certain small degrees of the enunciated features. Pure, naked capitalism is still not the rule, or is even forever impossible. Thus, the proposed ideal politics of time — a renewed socialism, on a liturgical basis — is also a matter of small, incremental gains worth pursuing, and small resistances to a total eclipse. Such resistances can, indeed, be considered as local resistances to globalization. But they will be effective and liturgical only if they blend universally to encompass the globe as a sacral locality.

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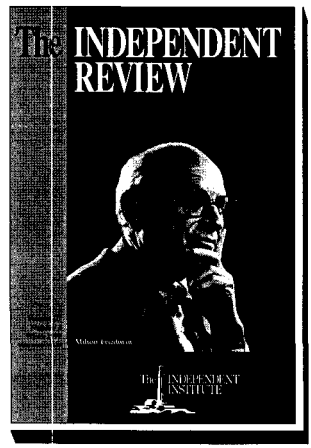

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The Displacement of the Liturgical in the Formation of Modernity

Peter McMylor and Maria Vorozhishcheva

It should be clear by now that the self-definition of modernity as a fundamental break with the past as a movement from ignorance and superstition to the gradual expansion of the rule of reason, is self-deception. This view masks the pathologies of the present, by seeing them as temporary irrationalities that will be healed sooner or later by the application of more of the same rationalism, and refuses to see how its sustaining beliefs are immanentizing parodies of earlier transcendent visions of the sacred.[1]

The decline of liturgy in the early modern period of Western history is normally captured under the rubric of secularization. However, secularization is a modernist concept, open to the same objections Catherine Pickstock raises concerning "rituals,"[2] i.e., it is a category carrying a weight of questionable social-science assumptions. Indeed, it is a concept that hides more than it reveals, for the history of Western modernity overflows with too much, rather than too little "spirit." The balance between immanence and transcendence has been transformed within modernity into a ferocious

1. Even the arch-defender of the Enlightenment, Jürgen Habermas, has felt forced to concede that "Philosophy, even in its postmetaphysical form, will be able neither to replace nor to repress religion as long as religious language is the bearer of a semantic content that is inspiring and even indispensable, for this content eludes (for the time being?) the explanatory force of philosophical language and continues to resist translation into reasoning discourses." Cited in Peter Dews, *The Limits of Disenchantment: Essays on Contemporary European Philosophy* (London: Verso, 1995), p. 10. For an account of one aspect of modern politics as a parody of the liturgy, see George L. Mosse, "Mass Politics and the Political Liturgy of Nationalism," in Eugene Kamenka, ed., *Nationalism: The Nature and Evolution of an Idea* (London: Edward Aronold, 1976).

2. See Catherine Pickstock, "Liturgy and Modernity," in this issue of *Telos*.

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this-worldly "religiosity."[3] This may seem strange, when so many intellectuals and social scientists still implicitly hold to some versions of the old secularization thesis.[4] But is it defensible?

The answer to this lies in recognizing how distinctive and, in a sense, how peculiar the political, cultural and moral perspectives of much of modern humanity are when viewed from a sufficiently broad comparative perspective. Even the conventional contrasts of the modern world with mediaeval Europe and the classical world is not sufficiently wide to grasp this distinctiveness, for the modern world is still so much the heir of what was formed in those earlier societies. This is why some of this century's great thinkers concerned with culture, (Weber, Jaspers, Voegelin, Eisenstadt) have had to cast their comparative net so wide. It is not just a matter of modern people, whose modernity can be embraced by the relatively simplistic sociological dichotomies of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, Tradition vs. Modernity, or Feudalism vs. Capitalism. The values of modern civilization have the shape they do, including their potent dynamic and aspirations, because of their complex inheritance from specific prior civilizations which were themselves important cultural innovators.

Symbols And "Progress"

The finitude of human existence makes human beings as much symbolizers of that which cannot be directly known, as they are tool users in the effort of physical survival. As Voegelin has shown, there are two basic forms of symbolization that can be noted across great tracks of human history. The first works with the symbolization of society as essentially an

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3. One of the most interesting proponents of the view that modernity must be understood not as a secularized age, but rather as a radically transmuted this-worldly religiosity is Harvie Ferguson. See his *The Science of Pleasure: Cosmos and Psyche in the Bourgeois Worldview* (London, Routledge, 1990) and *The Religious Transformations of Western Society: The End of Happiness* (London, Routledge, 1992). This position is supported by a scholar whose position could seem superficially to contradict this view, Marcel Gauchet who states: ". . . the modern Western world's radical originality lies wholly in its reincorporation, into the very heart of human relationships and activities, of the sacral elements which previously shaped this world from outside." See his *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 3.

4. The contemporary status of the debate over the secularization thesis is analyzed by José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1994), and in his earlier article, "The Politics of the Religious Revival," in *Telos* 59 (Spring 1984). The pronounced secularism of social science intellectuals may not be entirely disinterested, but rather may reflect anxiety and insecurity about the cognitive basis of their own discipline. See Robert Wuthnow, "Science and the Sacred," in P. E. Hammond, *The Sacred in a Secular Age* (Berkeley, University of California Press,1985).

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analogy of the cosmos and its regular order, the other makes use of the pattern of human existence and its natural life cycle. These two forms can be summed up as representing the social world, in Voegelin's terms, the first, as a microcosm; the second, as a form of macroanthropos.

The cosmological symbolization seems to have appeared first in human history and, as Voegelin argues, this is hardly surprising, "for earth and heaven are so impressively the embracing order into which human existence must fit itself, if it wants to survive, that the overwhelmingly powerful and visible partner in the community of being inevitably suggests its order as the model of all order, including that of man and society."[5] The second form of symbolization arises within diverse contexts, but generally after a profound crisis within the cosmologically symbolized empires. This can have the effect of not only breaking the political order, but also of destroying the trust in the formally sustaining cosmic order. Within such experiences of profound uncertainty and disturbance, a renewed search for symbolization takes a very radical conceptual step away from the uncertainties of the directly-experienced visible world toward an understanding of an unseen realm of more fundamental and transcendent reality. This can take a theistic form, but with elements drawn by analogy from human capacities, whether theoretical or materially creative. It marks the emergence of the great world-historical religions and civilizations, sometimes known as the axial age, between 500 BC and 600 AD, and provoked what Eisenstadt has described as "a basic tension between the transcendental and mundane orders, a conception that differed greatly from the close parallelism between these two orders or their mutual embedment which was prevalent in the so called pagan religions."[6]

The long term significance of this change can hardly be exaggerated for any understanding of contemporary life. The intellectual breakthrough of seeing a sharp contrast between mundane and transmundane worlds generated deep problems. Most important, such a cultural development posed the question of how to overcome the deep divide between transcendent and immanent orders. This is the problem of salvation and, frequently, its solution has entailed some reordering of human activity and personality. In such a context, as Eisenstadt puts it, "personal identity and the definition of

5. Eric Voegelin, *Israel and Revelation*, Volume 1 of *Order and History* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press,1956), p. 5

6. S. N. Eisenstadt, "The Axial Age: The Emergence of Transcendental Vision and the Rise of the Clerics," in *The European Journal of Sociology*, No. 23, (1982), p. 300. Originally, the concept was deployed by Karl Jaspers in *The Origin and Goal of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953).

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man were taken beyond the primordial givens of human existence, and beyond the various technical needs of daily activities. Purely personal virtues, such as courage, or interpersonal ones such as solidarity, have been taken out of their primordial framework and are combined, in different dialectical modes, with the attributes of resolution of the tension."[7]

The differing theophanic events meant to resolve the basic tension in these societies, as well as the pattern of their institutionalization, vary greatly.[8] Even those with no faith will have to admit that, in the West, Christianity was an especially successful response, with Christ's incarnation and his continual presence and accessibility via the Eucharist within the Church community. Here, "every foreign land was fatherland and every fatherland foreign."[9] From this perspective, the significance of the achievement of a balanced liturgical order becomes apparent. Its theoretical articulation was to be found in the Thomist synthesis of faith and reason.

The achievement of balance, however, cannot abolish the basic tension within a culture with a post-axial understanding. Rather, this balance must continually be reappropriated and rearticulated within the dynamic complexity of large societies. Naturally, such practices are never to be merely grasped intellectually, but depend on potentially disruptible areas of social and cultural life. In this sense, the mediaeval world constitutes a classic case of what MacIntyre [10] has described as the interdependence of the internal and external goods of a practice. This society was orientated to a transcendent good capable of achieving a teleologically-ordered partial completion within the interlocking networks of sacramental life and the festivals that provided a sacred canopy over daily life.

Such complex interdependence is vulnerable to the disturbing effects of changes within any one particular sphere. The move from a gift- to a partially-monetarized economy from the 11th century onwards[11] clearly had a destabilizing impact, but not necessarily a fatal one. As Pickstock

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7. *Ibid.* p. 299.

8. On the wide variety of these phenomena, see the work of S. N. Eisenstadt and his collaborators, in S. N. Eisenstadt, ed., *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilization* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1986).

9. From the 2nd century *Epistle to Diognetus*, cited in George Florovsky, *Christianity and Culture*, Vol. 2, of *The Collected Works of George Florovsky* (Belmont: Nordland Publishing Company, 1974), p. 27.

10. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (London: Duckworth, 1981), Chapter 14.

11. For an account of early medieval society as a gift economy, and the tensions that resulted from the transition to a monetarized economy, see Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (London: Paul Elek, 1978).

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points out about mediaeval society, "the practice of charity in the fraternities and guilds constantly ensured that surplus wealth was perpetually returned to the order of the liturgical cycle through the support of churches, monastic houses, hospitals, hospices, and annual festivals. In this way, the economic was subordinated to the liturgical order, into whose cyclical repetitions, a potentially abstract capital was expended. Thus, liturgy prevented the tendency of capital to displace the eschatological reserve in favor of an immanent teleology of accumulation."[12] These practices could inhibit an immanent teleology of accumulation that sprang from new market opportunities, because they effectively continued to reformulate motives for action within a non-individualistic frame of reference.[13] However, the decline of the guilds in the late 15th century should be seen in the context of a range of intellectual, social and political changes, which did allow such a reformulation of motives.

Pickstock charts the nature of the decline of liturgical culture in the West, especially the philosophical shift marked by the revived nominalism of the Franciscan Dun Scotus. What follows this decline is best understood as conditioned by tensions inherited in Christianity from its axial age breakthrough within the experiential world of 1st century Jewish messianic movements. This was partly signalled in the mediaeval world by a gradual elimination of the Church as the Kingdom of God: what Schmemann calls "the antinomial presence in this world of the world to come."[14] It was precisely the attempt in the West to rationalize and conceptualize this tension that dissolved the older patristic concept of the Church as *mysterion,* understood as "the holding together in a mystical and existential, rather than rational, synthesis of both the total transcendence of God and his genuine presence."[15] This can be seen in terms of the gradual dissolution of this tension between the old and the new, the "now" and what is "to

12. Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1998), p. 144.

13. It remains very important when discussing practices, especially religious ones, to avoid economic or structural determinism, that threatens to reduce their social importance in the life of a community to epiphenomenal status. As MacIntyre puts it, "Actions, as much as utterances, belong to the realm of statements, concepts and beliefs; and the relation of belief to action is not external and contingent, but internal and conceptual." Alasdair MacIntyre, "A Mistake About Causality in Social Science," in Peter Laslett and W. G. Runciman, eds., *Philosophy, Politics and Society*, Second Series, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), p. 52.

14. Alexander Schmemann "The Orthodox World: Past and Present," in his *Church, World, Mission* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1979), p. 55.

15. *Ibid.,* p. 60.

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come," by means of codified formulae providing clarity and the spurious stability of extra-temporal concepts such as "natural" and "supernatural," "nature" and "grace." This had the effect of sharpening the distinctions between the present and the transcendent realm, and turning "grace" into a created medium of existence rather than the indwelling of God. It turned eschatology into an exclusively futuristic concept, rather than a potential contemporary experience in the liturgical participation within the Church seen as the living community of the spirit.

Many consequences followed from this, but none were greater than the immanenist redivinization of human history. This seems to have been initiated by another Franciscan friar, Joachim of Fiore, in the 13th century. Joachim broke with the Augustinian vision of the Church as Christ present in the world by deploying the Trinity to recast history. Thus, the first age of history was the age of the Father, and the birth of Christ marked the beginning of the period of the Son. This, however, was not the final stage. There was yet a third age: the age of the Spirit. This third stage was characterized by the spiritual perfection of a community living together independently of any Church or other forms of authority, as the gifts of the Spirit would be available without the mediation of priests or sacraments.[16]

Here is the articulation of cultural and spiritual progress in history, which writers such as Voegelin and Löwith have identified as the fundamental source of modern ideologies of progress and development. As Voegelin put it: "in his Trinitarian eschatology Joachim created the aggregate of symbols which govern the self-interpretation of modern political society to this day."[17] Löwith points out that Joachim's shift in the interpretation of the Christian scheme of history created a climate "in which alone certain philosophies of history became possible which are impossible in the framework of classical thinking." Thus, "there would be no American, no French and no Russian revolutions and constitutions without the idea of progress and no idea of secular progress towards fulfillment without the original faith in Kingdom of God."[18]

In order to become socially effective, this immanentizing redivination of history required not simply a decay of the liturgical order of society, but

16. See M. Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future* (London: SPCK, 1976) and Delno West, *Joachim of Fiore and Christian Thought*, Vols. 1 and 2 (New York: Burt Franklin & Co., 1975).

17. Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), p. 111.

18. Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 212.

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a radical reordering of the eucharistic heart of the liturgical. As Pickstock has shown, the liturgical ordering of the medieval world meant that there was a sacramental canopy over almost all social activities, while community was defined by direct access to the sacrament, which continually renewed one's bonds with the transcendent reality of God and with one's fellows. Grace, which transcended time and history, located individuals and their cofraternity in the Church's *corpus mysticum*.

Reformation and Eclipse

The Reformation had many social and political consequences, but none was more important than the attack on liturgy: the reversal of the terms of grace from something outwardly bestowed by virtue of membership in the eucharistic community, to an indwelling of grace within the individual. This, in turn, became the criterion for membership within the gathered Church. Especially in its Calvinist form, not only did the Reformation do away with a mediating priesthood but, as a consequence, also with a direct communal relation with God. Individual and voluntary obedience to God's will became the central definition of Christian life.

The economic consequences are well known and have been discussed extensively since Max Weber.[19] In essence, the new terms of Godliness and its social recognition encouraged a this-worldly definition of Protestant soteriology since secular callings were now given the religious legitimacy of being possible roots to salvation that hitherto had been emphasized only in relation to monastic orders. The cultural dispositions to energetic economic activity, however, was not the only consequence of this development. It also had powerful political effects. As already noted, this dynamism generated various perfectionist and millenarian projects, not only within radical social movements, but also within liberalism itself. As Seligman has shown, the unstable and contested meanings of contemporary terms such as citizenship and civil society, have at their troubled roots the Reformation's this-worldly spiritual claims.[20] Once the Puritan Protestants sought to institutionalize themselves beyond the gathered Church, the bearers of "grace" moved, at least in principle, from the sect

19. The debate over this issue, especially in relation to Max Weber's contribution, has been extensive. For a good survey, see Gordon Marshall, *In Search of the Spirit of Capitalism: An Essay on Max Weber's Protestant Ethic Thesis* (London: Hutchinson, 1982). See also Luciano Pellicani, "Weber and the Myth of Calvinism," in *Telos* 75 (Spring 1988), the responses in the "Symposium on Weber's Protestant Ethic," in *Telos* 78 (Winter 1988-89), and further responses by Pellicani, Oakes and Wallace in *Telos* 81 (Fall 1989).

20. Adam Seligman, *The Idea of Civil Society* (New York: The Free Press,1992).

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to the community. As Seligman puts it, this meant that "grace" was "interiorized into individual conscience"[21] until eventually, in the 18th century, personal morality, attended by the inner illumination of natural law, rather than "grace," became the defining criterion of membership within church and community.

The gradual shift in the meaning of concepts cannot hide the continuing significance of the changes brought about by the Reformation for "the transcendental status of the individual (and of a society of said individuals) and the division of individual identity into universal/moral and private/egoistic components."[22] The sources of moral action still rested with the individual and the illumination of "grace" or, later, "reason." Thus, even though theology was gradually displaced by a kind of philosophical anthropology of civil society, the relation of the individual to the social, of parts to wholes, was still defined in terms of the particular twist the Protestant tradition had given to Christianity. Yet, the individual-social relation was still underpinned by a transcendent referent, be it "God's grace" or "reason." The radical character of these concepts has played itself out within modernity, with greater and greater emphasis given to attempted immanent and this-worldly realizations in various forms of the sacred community and the sacred individual within it. This means that "with the loss of these foundations in Reason and Revelation, the idea of Civil Society becomes the problem rather than the solution of modern existence."[23]

Post-axial age tensions remain within modernity. The distance between immanance and transcendence provides a lasting horizon, and the aspiration to bridge it is an enduring temptation. To understand the present predicament in these terms means to look once again at traditions and practices that seemed irrevocably gone. As modernity loses its taken-for-granted character, the old may yet be made new as a result of the inescapable realization of the continuing presence of the past in the present. As Schmemann puts it, in the Christian tradition — and maybe also in the Platonic tradition of Ancient Greece — there is "Homo sapiens, homo faber . . . yes, but, first of all, *homo adorans*. The first, the basic definition of man is that he is the priest. He stands in the center of the world and unifies it in his act of blessing God, of both receiving the world from God and offering it to God"[24]

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21. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
23. *Ibid.*, p.198.
24. Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World* (New York: St. Valdimir's Seminary Press, 1987), p. 15.

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This raises the question of liturgy, which today inevitably generates both resistance and misunderstandings. Too much of the self-definition of modernity is tied to notions of spontaneity and authenticity (often thought to be most present in acts of transgression)[25] for many to feel at all comfortable with the idea of liturgy. But it is at least helpful to understand that there is no need to adopt what might be called a liturgical concept of liturgy, with apparently "cultic" characteristics such as a sacred act of worship separate from all other aspects of life. This is itself a modern derailment that in practice turns liturgy into a semi-privatized form of media experience — a further strengthening of the society of the spectacle. This is far from the original meaning of *leitourgia,* the Greek word for liturgy: "*Leitourgia* meant an action by which a group of people become something corporately which they had not been as a mere collection of individuals — a whole greater than its parts. It meant also a function or 'ministry,' of a man or of a group, on behalf of, and in the interests of, the whole community. Thus the *leitourgia* of ancient Israel was the corporate work of a few chosen people to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah."[26]

The Jewish and Christian roots of liturgy also do not support the common assumption that liturgy is a practice at odds with the Greek heritage. This would be a mistake, as a number of interpreters of the ancient world have argued, for the contrast between Greece and Israel often produces an over rationalized account of Greece as a flattering predecessor of modernity.[27] In one of the best recent interpretations of Plato's dialogues,[28] Zdravko Planinc shows how ironic it is that most commentators today see Kallipolis, the "city constructed in speech" in *the Republic*, as an expression of Socrates' ideal city. In fact, Socrates constructs Kallipolis because it is what his interlocutors want: the expression of what Planinc calls "geometrical thinking." Socrates states that this is "only the second best city," and the best city is very difficult, but not impossible to construct. In order to do it, the philosopher "goes to the beginning" and tries to lead them to the "Good

25. See Phillip Rieff, *The Culture of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith After Freud* (New York: Harper Row, 1966), and his collection, *The Feeling Intellect: Selected Writings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

26. Schmemann, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

27. See Eric Voegelin, "The Gospel and Culture," in Ellis Sandoz, ed., *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin: Published Essays, 1966-1985*, Vol. 12 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990); Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); and S. R. L. Clarke, *From Athens to Jerusalem: The Love of Wisdom and the Love of God* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984).

28. Zdravko Planinc *Plato's Political Philosophy* (London: Duckworth, 1991).

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beyond being." The beginning of the city is beyond. As Socrates' companions are unable to follow him, he stops. Only in the *Laws* does Socrates come to the picture of Magnesia, "the most beautiful city" — a most complete paradigm of a city laid out in heaven: the image of the most just and prudent soul. In this city not only are laws founded in the "beginning which is beyond," but they are celebrated by all citizens under the guidance of the Council, performing the most beautiful, best and truest tragedy around the altar dedicated to the god. "All Magnesians ascend as far as they are able on the festive occasions, when the whole city sets out on the journey to the superheavenly region following the guidance of the Council."[29]

From this description it is possible to see why man is both a political and a eucharistic being. This is why a Church Father such as St. Basil the Great would refer to the Church as "God's own politeuma." It is founded in heaven and all inhabitants celebrate "the most beautiful tragedy," and "the influence of the God in their souls."[30] The Church comes to be what it is in the act of the celebration of the Eucharist, the perfect and reasonable sacrifice, the only sacrifice that can be offered: the sacrifice of praise. For what can be offered to the One, who is plenitude itself?

To articulate such a vision is one thing, to recast the relation of modernity to it is another. The critical issue here is the handling of immanence and transcendence within modernity. This relation has been discussed by academics, but has not been present in popular consciousness because the origins of modernity were implicitly suppressed by means of the concepts of progress and development. As Pickstock has indicated, societies such as mediaeval Europe, in which the liturgical was a dominant mode of life, treated this basic tension of a post-axial age society by localizing and particularizing the transcendent in the familiar ceremonies and festivals that punctuated the Christian liturgical year.

Secular modernity was shaped by the fragmentation of the liturgical order of Christian Europe. Today's politics are best understood against the background of the antiliturgical world of the post-Reformation. Concepts such as socialism, liberalism, citizenship, civil society, etc. take their meaning from attempts to institutionalize an immanent concept of community that has lost its eucharistic and liturgical center. Recognition of this fact will not heal the current sense of diremption. But it is the place to start in recognizing what Western society has become and what it can be.

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29. *Ibid.*, pp. 239-240.
30. *Ibid.*

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Religion and Secularism in Liberalism

Aryeh Botwinick

Emmanuel Levinas has provided a hermeneutical key for reinterpreting the Western intellectual tradition. Certain recurring conundrums of Western philosophy led him to regard ethics above all other modes of inquiry and to emphasize infinity rather than totality. Yet, the primacy of the ethical cannot do what he wants it to do. To reinterpret the Western intellectual tradition, it is necessary to shift emphasis to the distinction between infinity and totality. This highlights the religious dimension of secularism, i.e., how modern liberalism still nurtures a religious project, even if that project is itself the result of secularization. It also facilitates a new understanding of the role of key figures in the development of modernity, such as Machiavelli and Hobbes.

The Primacy of the Ethical

Levinas uses the Platonic terminology of the Same and the Other (as developed in *Sophist* and *Timaeus*) to indict Western philosophy. He condemns it for being "indissolubly bound up with the adventure that includes every Other in the Same,"[1] by which he means that the otherness of what lies outside or beyond one's framework is made to conform to the ordering mechanisms of language through conceptualization. As Levinas puts it: "Reason, which reduces the Other, is appropriation and power."[2] The Same not only overwhelms the Other; it is not even able to preserve its viability as the Same. Here the argument begins to echo Plato, especially the Third Man Argument in *Parmenides*.

1. Adrian Peperzak, *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1993), p. 99.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

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There are several problems with the Same. First, it locates the relation between theory and fact, words and objects, in such a way as to virtually guarantee the underdetermination of the former by the latter. The reason why it is impossible to go beyond the original formulation of the problem, whereby what is at stake is described by recourse to concepts and language as a matter of straightforward reportage of what exists, is that the choice of organizing frameworks remains underdetermined by external factors. Whether the vocabulary of choice or constraint is appropriate to describe the given "choice situation" is also underdetermined by factors outside the given situation. The conceptual framework of underdetermination itself remains underdetermined, which in a negative sense provides Levinas with an opening wedge for considering alternatives that are "Otherwise than Being," which is the master category of the Same.

An irreconcilable tension haunting Levinas' approach is that he can make room for the Other only by deploying the Same's full panoply of powers. In order to expose the thesis of the underdetermination of theory by fact as being itself underdetermined — to engage in the skeptical questioning of skepticism and to conjure what might lie beyond Being — Levinas needs to assume the primacy of the Same. The Same always triumphs over the Other. To make his argument for "Otherwise than Being," he must invoke what the conclusion of his argument seeks to rule out: the primacy of the Same over the Other. Caught on the horns of his own dilemma, Levinas' argument resembles Maimonides' case for negative theology.[3] In order to show that none of the attributes that monotheistic theology traditionally ascribes to God can be applied literally, Maimonides must presuppose this same God in order to divest him of these attributes. By analogy, in order to make his case for the Other, Levinas must exploit the resources of the Same — he needs the Same to call forth the Other.

Levinas repeatedly emphasizes that he is making a philosophical case for the limitations of philosophy in order to clear the way for God. But if his argument is largely negative, by emphasizing what reason cannot accomplish, two things follow. First, the category "Otherwise than Being" can be almost anything, i.e., Being as an overarching category bent on integrating all aspects of worldly experience can be contrasted with almost any set of phenomena too quirky to be susceptible to such a wholesale appropriation. The sense in which Levinas employs "Being"

3. Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, tr. by Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963). See the discussion of this work in my book, *Skepticism, Belief, and the Modern: Maimonides to Nietzsche* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

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can be contrasted with the shape of colors on the horizon, with an intimate, bonded relation with the earth, and, in Levinas' case, with the nudity of the face of the Other imposing impossible ethical demands from "before Being." Intuitively, it may be possible to appreciate the greater gravity of ethical imperatives above esthetic considerations, and the need for greater communion with the environment. But Levinas claims he is relying on reasoned philosophical arguments, rather than on intuition. Yet, there is an irreducible arbitrariness in his choice of the Other as the opposite of Being. The fact that Being is not self-justifying does not pave the way for any humanly-centered category as its appropriate complement.

Theunissen[4] has developed an ideal typology for theorizing about the Other, contrasting two broad approaches.[5] He associates the first (transcendental phenomenology) with Husserl and Heidegger, and the second (dialogism) with Buber. Levinas is a severe critic of Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology. He tries to develop a version of Buberian dialogism richer than that of Buber himself. In addition, Levinas has strong theological motives for positing the Other as a precondition of the self. From his perspective, God needs to be mediated through the Other, following the imperatives of negative theology. A more direct route to God, one that seeks to describe his nature and his difference from the mundane, would assimilate him to the world by virtue of the humanly-constrained descriptions it would be compelled to employ. To declare God to be totally different, i.e., to use a human vocabulary to denote that difference, however negatively, is to affirm what theological strictures seek to rule out — a human delimitation of God. From this perspective, a recourse to the Other becomes the most extreme of philosophical gestures: it bypasses the inconsistent gesture of speaking about our inability to speak about God. Indeed, it obviates resorting to language altogether with regard to describing God. The existence of multiple Others is a forceful reminder of the insufficiency of the Same, despite all efforts of continuing self-aggrandizement.

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4. Michael Theunissen, *The Other: Studies in the Social Ontology of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre and Buber*, tr. by Christopher Macann (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984).

5. Fred Dallmayr summarizes them as follows: "Transcendental phenomenology, abbreviated as 'transcendentalism' and the 'philosophy of dialogue' or 'dialogism.' While, starting from the premise of the ego, the first position seeks access to intersubjectivity by construing the other basically as an 'other I' or *alter ego*, the second position derives ego or self in some manner from an original encounter with a 'Thou'." See Fred Dallmayr, *Critical Encounters: Between Philosophy and Politics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), p. 211.

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What is problematic here is that dialogism inexorably merges with transcendental phenomenology. Levinas' retort to Derrida only confirms Derrida's critique. Derrida quoted "a Greek who said, 'If one has to philosophize, one has to philosophize; if one does not have to philosophize, one still has to philosophize (to say it and think it). One always has to philosophize."[6] To this, Levinas responds that "not to philosophize would not be 'to philosophize still'."[7] However, to resist philosophizing, to declare its writ terminated, is just another philosophical move. To affirm the primacy of the Other, to assign priority to ethics above ontology, is to register a certain philosophical understanding concerning the limitations of reason and what that means. Levinas' critique of Heidegger's transcendental phenomenology can also be extended to Levinas himself. According to Levinas, "Being is *not* a being. It is a Neuter which orders thought and beings."[8] The same can be said to Levinas: "the Other is not a person. It is a Neuter, which orders thought and beings."

Levinas' analysis of the Other ends up impaled on the horns of a dilemma. If the feelings of extreme vulnerability Levinas describes as leading to a total assumption of responsibility even for one's persecutors is taken as an empirical description of a universal human experience, then Levinas, as a phenomenologist, would have to acknowledge that brute experience without conceptual overlay is the most ideal construct of all, i.e. that the human world is constituted by a series of conceptual frameworks that define experience. But if he takes an idealist approach and claims that vulnerability results from the postulation of a *particular* conceptual framework for comprehending this experience, then the role of the Same in shaping a world in which the Other is dominant is affirmed even more brazenly. In either case, he faces an insuperable challenge in making sense of it by avoiding the Same extending its sway over experience. "My responsibility for the Other . . . testifies to Infinity,"[9] because of a certain conceptual framework that is brought to bear in developing a relation with the Other.

Levinas is enamored with Descartes' ontological proof of God's existence as a philosophical strategy enabling him to make his case for the primacy of ethics. How does the "Cartesian bridge" work? How does the

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6. Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, tr. by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).
7. Emmanuel Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. by Adrian T. Peperzak *et al.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 148.
8. Peperzak, *To the Other*, *op. cit.*, p. 102.
9. Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

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notion of the infinite — the idea of God — become transformed into a proof of God's existence?[10] Following Anthony Kenny, the ontological argument may be schematized as follows: (1) God's existence is possible. (2) God is by definition all-powerful and independent. (3) God can exist by His own power. (4) What can exist by its own power, does exist. (5) God exists.[11]

Kenny argues that Descartes' God resembles Meinong's "pure object," which "stands between being and nonbeing."[12] The problem with Meinong's "pure object" and Descartes' "possible God" is that it is impossible to provide criteria of identity for them. As Quine rhetorically asks: "What sense can be found in talking of entities which cannot meaningfully be said to be identical with themselves and distinct from one another?"[13] The only way that criteria of identity can be met for God is if, from being a *possible* object, He becomes an *actual* one. A major strategy for accomplishing this transformation is a skeptical one — the underdetermination of theory by fact. The existence of the world is compatible with the thesis of Divine existence and creation. On the basis of facts about the world, this thesis cannot be conclusively ruled out. Yet, the thesis of underdetermination only succeeds in accomplishing a negative result. It restores parity between scientific and theological accounts of nature by arguing that none of these accounts can be ruled out on the basis of facts. This thesis only enshrines skepticism. It no more succeeds in proving infinity than in establishing a thoroughly finite universe.

In a positive vein, it is ironic that Levinas, a philosopher attempting to

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10. René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, tr. by Laurence J. Lafleur (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1960). This is how Levinas appropriates Descartes' deployment of the idea of the infinite: "After the certainty of the *Cogito*, present to itself in the Second Meditation, the Third Meditation announces that in some way I have in me the notion of the infinite earlier than the finite-to wit, the notion of God before that of myself. . . . The putting into us of an unincludable idea overturns that presence to self which consciousness is, forcing its way through the barrier and checkpoint, eluding the obligation to accept or adopt all that enters from the outside. It is then an idea signifying with a signifyingness prior to presence, to all presence, prior to every origin in consciousness and thus anarchical, accessible in its trace. It signifies with a signifyingness from the first older than its exhibition, not exhausting itself in exhibiting itself, not drawing its meaning from its manifestation, and thus breaking with the coinciding of being with appearance in which, for Western philosophy, meaning or rationality lie, breaking with synopsis." Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-37.

11. Anthony Kenny, *Descartes: A Study of his Philosophy* (New York: Random House, 1968), pp. 160-61.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

13. W. V. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), p. 4; cited in Kenny, *Descartes*, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

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clear the way for the possibility of God, rather than a theologian directly addressing issues of God's intelligibility, should duplicate negative theological arguments. What drives negative theologians like Maimonides to conceive of God in non-humanly accessible terms (with the actual vocabulary used to describe God being irredeemably metaphoric) is the quest to end the search for primary causes. By positing as the ultimate explanation a God utterly different from all things human, what needs to be explained is sharply differentiated from what does the explaining, thus ruling out the possibility of a more primary explanation. Levinas duplicates this structure of argument. The appropriate context to make sense of Being is the impossible ethical demands emanating from the Other. What restores repose to metaphysical inquiry is the invocation of the ethical dimension, whose starting, rather than culmination point is finality: human beings conceived as unbreachable ends, demanding rather than supplying reasons. Levinas thus provides a metaphorical version of immanence. The monotheistic God is not in the world, but his metaphorical stand-in — the ethical standpoint originating in the finality of human ends, rather than laboriously striving toward finality through protracted arguments — is transposed into the world. Since any location of the monotheistic God within the world has to be construed metaphorically (including the location of the literal God of revelation), the location of a metaphoric surrogate for God is seen on a par with "immanentizing" the literal God. The superimposition of a metaphor upon a metaphor (ethics for God) does not render the search for immanence any less self-defeating.

Both the negative and positive aspects of Levinas' theorizing of the primacy of the ethical suggest that he has provided a mesmerizing rhetoric of religious thought and practice rather than a philosophical defense of the category "Otherwise than Being." He has provided a broader frame of reference for speaking about God without having effectively transformed rational limitations into new premises for validating God's existence.

Totality and Infinity

In the course of explaining why, taken by themselves, the concepts of Being and Same are inadequate, Levinas provides a transition to the totality versus infinity approach as superseding the primacy of the ethical. He links skepticism and his attempts to burst the traditional Western philosophical framework:[14] the "return of the diachrony refusing the present makes up the

14. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, tr. by Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), p. 169.

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invincible force of skepticism." The periodic return of skepticism throughout the history of Western philosophy is symptomatic of the failure of synchronous modes of thought — the epitome of assertions of the Same — to resolve philosophical perplexity. Synchronous philosophical positions invariably give rise to their skeptical antitheses, but a commitment to synchrony rules out a coherent formulation of skepticism. The attempt to *formulate* skeptical arguments founders on the charge of inconsistency, because to be consistently skeptical requires one to be skeptical of skepticism as well.

A way out of this dilemma is to introduce some version of diachrony, which would keep skeptical questioning analytically distinct from the resulting inconsistent skeptical formulations. This could be done by invoking multivalued logics suspending the law of the excluded middle and thus legitimating a third possibility: not just the contrasting options of skepticism and not-skepticism, but also the paradoxical case of skepticism predicated on not-skepticism.[15] The philosophical surge toward synchrony is defeated by the limitations of ordinary logic and language, which require diachronous patterns of expression in order to achieve maximum coherence. This leads Levinas to claim that "language is already skepticism."[16] A generalized agnosticism enhances the persuasiveness of this position. This version of skepticism seems to be the most consistent translation of the doctrine, since it validates being skeptical about skepticism. In addition, it paves the way for the legitimation of multivalued logics, because it resists assigning finality to any vision of reality generated by any of the sciences.

Given the pervasiveness of skepticism, Levinas' notion of the Other has to be deliteralized, so that its content adds nothing beyond what is suggested by the notion of infinity. Contrary to what superficial readings might suggest, the Other does not constitute a conceptually-unmediated trace emanating from "Otherwise than Being." The means for affirming the trace of God in the world is the *concept* of infinity itself (in opposition to totality)[17] and its pervasiveness in modern Western thought. An illuminating way to read Levinas is in a strongly-negative theological vein, which couples negative theology with a negative hermeneutics. The notion of the Other blocks the conceptual self-aggrandizement of the Same (it summarizes how the previously-discussed dilemmas of self-referentiality rule out the total conquest of experience in a burst of rampant

15. W. V. Quine, *Philosophy of Logic* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 85.
16. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, *op. cit.*, p. 170.
17. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, tr. by Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

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skepticism) rather than literally affirming the role of the Other in shaping the self. A negative hermeneutics needs to be applied to Levinas' concept of the Other, emphasizing what it preempts, not what it affirms.

The idea of "totality" paves the way for the possibility of assigning a positive content to concepts. But the notion of "infinity" suggests that one can proceed only negatively, with thought blocking the projection of final positive content onto concepts. After skeptically exposing their vulnerability, skepticism itself cannot be contained within particular concepts; it needs to be expanded diachronically as a generalized agnosticism which, because it does not allow the possibility of embracing anything conclusively, leaves the door open for what might lie beyond Being. "Infinity" conjures up the negative import of theorizing.

From a negative theological perspective, through the category of generosity (and its relation to epistemological limitation), it is possible to go from the self to the Other. If Levinas fails to establish the primacy of ethics over epistemology, an alternative route starting from the self (the Same — Identity rather than Difference) might work by emphasizing the limitations of reason. Thus, for Maimonides, arbitrariness emerges as the fundamental epistemological category. Given the premises of negative theology and the dilemmas they generate, all descriptions of divine attributes misfire: they are all equally arbitrary. For Maimonides, the ethical correlate of epistemological arbitrariness is *hesed* (kindness or generosity).[18] The lack of a basis for knowledge signifies arbitrariness; the lack of a worldly basis for behaving kindly toward others defines generosity. Generosity renders active the passivity and helplessness engendered by epistemological arbitrariness. Generosity means converting the lack of a basis for action into a principle of action. Ethics redeems epistemology; principles of action render usable undeniable principles of thought.[19]

Following Plato, Maimonides emphasizes that, after achieving the supreme intellectual insights concerning human rational limitation, one

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18. Maimonides identifies *hesed* with "practicing beneficence toward one who has no right at all to claim this from you." See Maimonides, *Guide*, *op. cit.*, p. 631.

19. The transmutation of arbitrariness into generosity in Maimonides' thought follows a Platonic trajectory: "It is clear that the perfection of man that may truly be gloried in is the one acquired by him who has achieved, in a measure corresponding to his capacity, apprehension of Him, may He be exalted, and who knows His providence extending over His creatures as manifested in the act of bringing them into being and in their governance as it is. The way of life of such an individual, after he has achieved this apprehension, will always have in view loving-kindness, righteousness, and judgment, through assimilation to His actions, may He be exalted, just as we have explained several times in this Treatise." *Ibid.*, p. 638.

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must return to the cave — to the realm of shadows — and imitate the divine attributes of kindness, righteousness and judgment in one's practice. There is no secure basis for knowledge, so that what passes as such really consists of crystallizations of the energies of the will. All knowing is a form of doing, of directly intervening in the world to discover and to fashion what is. Such actions involve risks. Behaving generously fills a central gap in Maimonides' epistemology, because "generosity" (an "overflow" of the self that enables it to take risks) is the nonfoundational material that constitutes a "foundation" of knowledge.

A Maimonidean link between epistemology, ethics, and political theory can be traced in Hobbes, connecting his skepticism, nominalism, and contractualism. What facilitates the triumph of the institutional *status quo* over the state of nature and lone defiance in Hobbes' social contract presupposes an environment where coordinated social interaction is possible and the consequences of deviating are obvious.[20] In other words, the social-contract society succeeds only if it is already a going concern, but poses daunting dilemmas as an institutional design to be established in the first place. Part of Hobbes' problem, both historically (in writing during a time when the traditional political order had become deranged and some competitors for political power were relishing the need for periodic disorder) and theoretically (in providing a justification for political authority from the ground up, engaging in an intellectual *creatio ex nihilo* that takes nothing for granted) is how to account for his vision of the establishment of a properly ordered society. In terms of his political theory, it is at least as important to provide a satisfactory resolution of the problem of institution as it is to account for the nature of a just society and the mechanisms that perpetuate it.

Partially by way of addressing this issue, Hobbes is concerned as much with cultivating a personality type emphasizing honor as he is with those devoted to survival or prosperity.[21] Hobbes identifies magnanimity with the just conduct that springs from a "contempt" of injustice, and he

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20. David Lewis, *Convention: A Philosophical Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 88-96.

21. See Michael Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1962), p. 94. Hobbes says, "That which gives to human actions the relish of justice is a certain nobleness or gallantness of courage, rarely found, by which a man scorns to be beholden for the contentment of his life to fraud, or breach of promise. This justice of the manners is that which is meant, where justice is called a virtue; and injustice a vice." Hobbes refers to two emotions that can counteract the inherent weakness of covenants, which rely on "the force of words": "a fear of the consequence of breaking their word," and "a glory, or pride in appearing not to need to break it."

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recognizes that men are sometimes prepared to lose their lives rather than suffer shame.[22] He also says that "magnanimity is a sign of power."[23] How, then, does Hobbes account for the first steps in society's transition from a state of nature to a social contract? The answer implicit in the cited quotations is that at least some members of the original society have to be sufficiently magnanimous, in the sense of Maimonides' *hesed,* that they must be willing to take unprecedented risks for the benefit of all, even though the mechanisms of mutual calculation and restraint designed to limit those risks are not yet in place. The mechanism of calculation is institutionalized only when the social contract is established. Before that, it is only in accordance with such motivational factors as "honor" and "magnanimity," the Hobbesian counterparts to Maimonidean *hesed*, that one breaks into this circle, begins to act on the basis of the new prudential principles, and thereby fosters the creation of the new society.

The merging of dialogism and transcendental phenomenology suggests that rational limitations prevent a shift from the Same to the Other. The most that can be done in a negative theological vein is to transform limitations into vantage points from which to launch new interventions, whose outcomes remain as unpredictable and ambiguous as earlier "unredeemed" interactions. The route from "causality" to "responsibility"[24] can be plotted along the lines sketched by Maimonides and Hobbes, and not only in accordance with Levinas' projected movement beyond ontology. There is also an ethical motive for staying within the bounds of skepticism in negotiating this transition. The critical role of human fallibility and the need to continually compensate for it is sustained better by staying on the skeptical level of the Same than by postulating a pre-ontological role for the Other.

Levinas privileges the relation with the self in contrast to the relation with the Other. The self is tractable; the Other is not.[25] Accordingly: "Between the one I am and the Other for whom I am responsible there gapes open a difference, without a basis in community. . . Proximity is a difference, a non-coinciding, an arrhythmia in time, a diachrony refractory to thematization, refractory to the reminiscence that synchronizes the phases of a past. The unnarratable Other loses his face as a neighbor in narration. The relation with him is indescribable in the literal sense of the term,

22. Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics*, *op. cit.*, p. 291.
23. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, *op. cit.*, p. 60.
24. Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 94.
25. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

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unconvertible into a history, irreducible to the simultaneousness of writing, the eternal present of a writing that records or presents results." The Other cannot be narrated, only engaged diachronically. However, the self apparently is susceptible to narration and can be appropriated synchronically. Levinas resists such a reading. It also could be argued that if, as Levinas has stated, "language is skepticism," then the self, which is mediated largely through language, is the Other (or at least one of the dominant Others).[26]

The advantage of Hobbes' concept of power, which remains within the arena of the Same, over Levinas' category of the Other is that it enables Hobbes to appreciate the extent to which one's relation with the Self is as complex, oblique, and intractable as one's relation with the Other. The nature of human beings becomes as destabilized and unhinged as the nature of God. Hobbes might have designed his category of "the passions" negatively to emphasize the primacy of factors having nothing to do with reason, with what is conceptually definable and intersubjectively transparent. This may be symptomatic of a vast conceptual emptiness concerning the nature of human beings, which parallels the vast conceptual emptiness surrounding the nature of God in monotheistic theology. For Hobbes, "passion" signifies "not-reason," and does not have any autonomous content of its own. The pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain with which he identifies "passion" are equally empty categories, whose content can be filled only retrospectively, on the basis of an investment of human energies that eventuate in ideas, events, structures, etc. that can be identified as harbingers of pleasure or sources of pain. Along with "passion," "pleasure" and "pain" refer to an inchoate field of action whose energies need to be channeled before more precise readings can emerge. Juxtaposing Hobbes to Levinas clarifies how the vocabularies of ethics and epistemology are equally metaphorical. In the end, the Self is as enigmatic as the Other, and for analogous reasons.

Machiavelli, Hobbes and Liberalism in Levinas' Perspective

Machiavelli's implied embrace of the "totality versus infinity" distinction in his approach to power facilitated the birth of modernity. He theorizes power in such a way that, the more it is displaced, the more effective it becomes. Where "appearance" does the job of "reality" (the "reputation"

26. Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 148. Thus, he says that "An alternating rhythm of the said and the unsaid, and the unsaid being unsaid in its turn, will have to be substituted for the unity of discourse. There is here a breakup of the omnipotence of the logos, that of system and simultaneity."

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for power substitutes for the "reality" of power, e.g., "deterrence" accomplishes the same result as actual military mobilization and engagement), then one is "truly powerful." His model political animal is the fox, rather than the lion, where stratagem substitutes for brute force.[27] The lion is a devotee of "totality"; the fox represents "infinity," infinite substitutions for an unrealizable brute force. According to Machiavelli, whether power has been maximized or undermined in a particular situation can be established through a series of counter-factual probings. If one had acted differently on a particular occasion, would one have reached the same outcome with more or less violence? Would more or fewer lives have been spared? It is the invocation of counter-factual tests that determines the degree of power at a state's disposal. The Machiavellian paradox consists in showing how power is "present" the more fully it is "absent."

One of the things Hobbes and subsequent social-contract theorists learned from Machiavelli is that state-building consists in minimizing overt uses of power. This insight is institutionalized in classical liberal theory in the social contract, where the assertion of power is posited as a pre-political, pre-civil act. What marks the fashioning of civil society is the containment of power in its unbridled, menacing forms. In the liberal state, assigning primacy to "procedure" over "substance" — the subordinate, instrumentalized role the public sphere plays in relation to the private sphere — seems to be a response to the Machiavellian view that, the more power is dispersed and deferred, the more enduring it becomes.

The concept of power animating Machiavelli's thought can be interpreted as an implicit response to the dilemmas of self-referentiality haunting formulations of skepticism in Western thought. If contained, limited skepticism develops into unmitigated, open-ended skepticism through a shift from descriptive to validationist paradigms of doing philosophy. If what makes sense in terms of a set of particular premises becomes skeptically vulnerable once one questions those premises, then even limited claims can be challenged skeptically. This skeptical critique points to traces of unredeemed power in theoretical formulations. A key meta-theoretical vulnerability of a skeptical perspective is that, if skeptical canons are applied consistently, they end up consuming themselves. One needs to be skeptical of skepticism as well as of its competitors. If a not-fully-executed skeptical critique of concepts produces a recognition of the tremendous role played by power considerations of various sorts,

27. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, tr. by George Bull (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 99.

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then the "trick" becomes to theorize power in such a way that echoes of this not-fully-achieved devolution of theory onto power are erased. Machiavelli theorizes power in such a way that all vestiges of the issue of self-referentiality have been "folded" into it. He conceives of power as involving endless deferral. The foundationless-character of reason displaces onto power, and power in turn displaces onto an endless displacement of itself. This may be described as the Machiavellian encapsulation of Levinas' notion of "infinity." As with Levinas, skepticism points to the traces of the infinite.

In Machiavelli's thought, "power" registers the same sort of ambiguity that "the Other" does in Levinas' thought. Power stands somewhere in-between tautology and objective description. On the one hand, to refer to power as shaping the outcome of a situation is just a way of redescribing that whatever happened happened. Power becomes a neutral conceptual currency into which the self-images and official proclamations of agents can be discounted. On the other hand, the vocabulary of power seems to provide an objective description in terms of what it rules out — the inflated pretensions of those agents. Analogously, the notion of the Other in Levinas seems to be situated somewhere in-between a further conceptual artifact claimed by autonomy (the Same) and a manifestation of heteronomy (being grasped by the Other). Alternatively, if Levinas is not succeeding, i.e., if the Other cannot be theorized successfully without extending the empire of the Same, then he is engaging in a series of power moves that he designates as responsiveness to the Other. Levinas would then find himself in Machiavellian territory. The Other would have to be seen at least partially as fixed by a series of power moves.

The concept of power Machiavelli bequeaths to Hobbes engenders a theorizing of the liberal state as the custodian of a movement toward horizontal transcendence — of time stretching endlessly forward to infinity. Kant and Rawls have described liberal democracy as that form of state which institutionalizes "the priority of the right over the good." The state is officially debarred from embracing its own concept of the good, but must instead assign priority to individuals and groups in the private sphere to exercise their primordial right to elaborate and pursue their own version of the good. The state's role is to safeguard the autonomy of individuals and groups in the private sphere, so that they can exercise their primary right to separateness (including the right to formulate particular visions of the good). As Thomas Nagel and others have argued, however, this subordination of the public to the private sphere is itself grounded in a concept

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of the good that identifies it with neutrality.[28] Nagel does not elaborate the background concept of the good animating the liberal state. In metaphysical terms, it could be described as the pursuit of horizontal transcendence opening up to infinity. The liberal state is structured in such a way as to ensure endless deferral of such issues as sovereignty, truth, and justice. The public sphere defers to the private sphere, which in turn has its demands processed by multiple tiers of government that contribute both to dispersing and deferring a concerted stand on any of the overarching issues affecting the life of the community. The diffusion of decision-making across generations also contributes to dispersal and deferral.

From a narrower epistemological perspective, the liberal state resists embracing a more positive concept of the good, because of its implicit grounding in skepticism. The problem with skepticism, however, is that it is an untenable philosophical thesis. To be consistently skeptical requires one to be skeptical of one's own skepticism, and thus to disengage from the very position one is seeking to defend. As already suggested, the version of skepticism able to accommodate these scruples is a generalized agnosticism, requiring "horizontal transcendence." If every current crystallization of meaning needs to be displaced onto future crystallizations in order to conform to the requirements of a generalized agnosticism, i.e., taking into account the possibility that the returns are not fully in line with theoretical formulations, and if "vertical transcendence" is ruled out by skepticism and/or negative theology, then "horizontal transcendence" constitutes a most plausible candidate for carrying the conceptual weight of a consistent skepticism. Horizontal transcendence is integral to liberal politics. The future is needed as a continual balancing and corrective mechanism to the past — a kind of institutionalization of a pattern of reverse causation. Every moment in human existence remains radically incomplete, with later events, occurrences and discoveries being required to render more precise (more filled with content) current formulations. A generalized agnosticism establishes the future as an indispensable resource for rendering current statements clearly and objectively.

Hobbes' projection of the Leviathan as a progressively developing society that persists into the indefinite future harbors the motif of a generalized agnosticism. His widespread skepticism (which can be sustained only as a generalized agnosticism) guides him to postulate a non-disruptive future as a continuing resource for filling-in with content a not-fully-realized present.

28. Thomas Nagel, "Review of John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*," in *Philosophical Review* 82 (1973), pp. 220-34.

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In Levinas' arresting formulation, "The awaiting of the Messiah is the duration of time itself."[29] Hobbes cements the link between a negatively-constituted political society and a generalized agnosticism.

"Infinity," which is the value implicit in Machiavelli's concept of power as endless deferral, turns out to be the most promising candidate for the category of the "supreme good" underlying liberalism's embrace of the priority of the right over the good. The normative basis for liberal-democratic politics may be conceived as a nurturance of time to enable the play of contingency to be redeployed again and again without succumbing to either premature abstraction or closure, or under-responding by failing to capitalize on the range of possibilities residing within current constellations of forces. The political has to do with keeping the prospect of successive presents endlessly available.

A Generalized Agnosticism and the Politicization of Liberalism

A generalized agnosticism can serve as a spur to the continuing politicization of liberalism. The liberal state's self-identification as a neutral, proceduralist state often belies (as Foucault has pointed out) the role of bureaucratic regimes of power-knowledge in "normalizing" the population so that a liberal *ethos* predominates. There are often class-beneficiaries and class-losers when a liberal *ethos* and bureaucracies officially favoring neutrality and fairness entrench themselves. A generalized agnosticism as the metaphysical backdrop to liberalism gives the liberal state a critical perspective on itself. If what undergirds it is skepticism, and a consistent skepticism requires it to be skeptical of its own skepticism, then any institutitional translation of the ideal of skepticism (any particular balance of power or equilibrium between opposing classes or groups within the state) can be skeptically challenged. The openness to ongoing challenge is certified in a crucial way by a generalized agnosticism. The Gramscian dialectic of hegemony-counter-hegemony is encapsulated in this construal of the metaphysical seedbed of liberalism.

Contra Carl Schmitt, the political is not only a function of a people (a nation) defining itself in relation to a particular constellation of value(s). In order for the notion of the political to take root, a people has to have some appreciation of the limits of its constitutive value(s) when situations of tension or occasions of conflict arise either within the national community or between it and other national communities. Hobbes, who serves as one of

29. Emmanuel Levinas, *The Levinas Reader*, ed. by Sean Hand (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 203.

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Schmitt's major theoretical precursors, assigns primacy to will and the passions above reason in relation to a skeptical metaphysical backdrop whose most coherent translation is a generalized agnosticism. From a Hobbesian perspective, skepticism only works to certify the collective assumption of a particular configuration of value as the generative moment of identity if the skepticism is suffused with skepticism of itself — with the totalistic urge to achieve certain knowledge definitive of skepticism correcting itself to remain open to the claims of infinity. Because politics is predicated on responses to situations of tension and conflict, and not just a flaunting and promoting of one's integrally-experienced sense of values, one can say that, from a liberal perspective, the central meta-political principle that nurtures and supports the articulation of liberal values is a generalized agnosticism that rescues liberalism from being another totalizing ideology and confers upon it the sanction of infinity.

Schmitt is right to the extent that only within the context of a liberal mythology and meta-narrative (nurtured, as Macpherson argued, by the emerging class structure of 17th century British society) does this Levinasian interpretation of the Machiavellian concept of power take root in liberalism. But the primacy of circularity not just for making sense of arguments, but also for the rise and spread of social movements is implicit in a generalized agnosticism. This approach suggests that reality is never known sufficiently to serve as an ultimate constraint on theorizing. Therefore, theorizing must be construed as just another event in the world that later theorizing can attempt to theorize and devise logical protocols for. From the perspective of a generalized agnosticism, the charge of circularity loses its sting. It can be viewed as proceeding on the premises of the incompleteness and at least partially-unknown character of objective reality. Since reality is partially unknown, "circularity" — building the salient point(s) of one's conclusion into one's premise(s) — constitutes an artful philosophical strategy for producing a symmetrical argument that will provisionally fill in the objective-knowledge gap. If there is no firm external check against a premise or an argument as a whole, then "circularity" becomes a fact of logical life.[30] In Lyotard's words, "Supporting

30. This formulation presupposes the validity of Quine's argument in "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," that it is the totality of the statements taken to be true that is hauled before the bar of experience in the face of any given adverse experience, and that therefore the line demarcating analytic and synthetic statements is shifting and pragmatic — ultimately (but not immediately) rectifiable in the light of experience. See W. V. O. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), pp. 20-46.

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an argument means looking for a 'paradox' and legitimating it with new rules in the games of reasoning."[31] In a generalized-agnostic universe, circular argument yields a thought construct that serves as a surrogate for a reality that is not otherwise conceptually containable. The circular argument confers durability and weight on its components when reality provides none. Correspondingly, a circular construal of the social environment renders more intelligible all of its historical emergences.

Liberalism and the Conditions of its Reproducibility

The reconceptualization of liberalism in Levinasian terms as an institutional design open to infinity enhances one of the conditions of its own reproducibility. It is well-known how liberalism undermines the autonomy of civil institutions by imposing its liberal requirements on them, thereby overloading itself and undermining its survivability as a liberal state. The liberal state's deferral to the private sphere is often within the context of moral and constitutional parameters fixed by the liberal state itself and, therefore, from the perspective of affected groups in the private sector, the deferral might appear more symbolic than real. Part of the problem that liberalism as a public philosophy confronts is that its ideological translations are not sufficiently faithful to the complexities of its inspiring doctrine. Liberalism is envisioned most coherently as an institutionalization of skepticism. This skepticism undercuts the claims of particular individuals or groups to superior knowledge and, from a negative standpoint (no one can put forward an incontrovertibly grounded positive claim), it justifies the inclusion of as many people as possible in public decision-making. At the same time, because the results reached cannot claim an unreserved epistemological sanction, liberalism introduces a series of braking mechanisms that allow existing democratic outcomes to be reconsidered and revised.

Liberalism as a preoccupation with process in all the manifold constitutional and institutional senses facilitates a continual replenishment and adjustment of democratic content. The emphasis on "process" as a metaphysical concept in Plato's *Theaetetus* is translated in the course of the history of democratic theory into the more narrowly political set of notions grouped under the rubric "liberal democracy," where no public verdict on any issue can be conceived as final. Majority rule is counter-balanced by

31. Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, tr. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 54.

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minority rights, and the content of "rights" in turn is subject to majority interpretation and redefinition. Under this more expansive, metaphysical reenvisioning of the nature of democracy, it is not only "the people" but also "sovereignty," "truth," and "the ultimate *telos* of human personal and collective life" that are "instituted and sustained" by what Claude Lefort has called "the dissolution of the markers of certainty."[32] These concepts function as "absent presences," i.e., neither as "compact" notions nor as "nullities" in a democracy, but rather as continually-actualized and incompletely-realized ideas whose content is reinvigorated pragmatically from all directions, including democracy and liberalism.[33]

The re-drawing of the boundary between the secular and the religious (by showing how the idea of infinity is encoded in the dominant Western secular image of a liberal society) enables liberalism to redefine itself in relation to its ideological adversaries and political competitors by showing how they cannot do better than liberalism in delineating and pursuing a concept of the good. Liberalism theorized as responding to the call of infinity is able to "trump" both its religious-fundamentalist and secular-utopian adversaries by incorporating what is of value in their formulations (the negative notion of infinity) and dissociating it from any kind of positive content whatsoever, be it of a substantive religious sort or some technological embodiment of an ideal realm. In response to the criticism that this version of liberalism is bereft of a criterion of value to determine choice between conflicting alternatives, the critics themselves end up being vulnerable to skeptical attack. The virtue of this approach to liberalism is that it integrates into its understanding of a liberal society the dialectic of skepticism — how skepticism undercuts itself and eventuates in the institutionalized self-questioning of a generalized agnosticism. From this perspective, theorizing has to be viewed as a thoroughly naturalized activity, as constitutionally unable to certify its connectedness to any of its objects. The prospect of an irretrievably disparate distribution of theorizing to one domain and its objects to other domains can have beneficial moral consequences. Casting theorizing adrift from its objects means that the last of the bulwarks protecting us against uncertainties — a theoretical delineation of particular regions of experience — has been removed, so that there is nothing but one's reactivated moral intuitions and alarm

32. Claude Lefort, *Democracy and Political Theory*, tr. by David Macey (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp. 17-19.

33. Fred Dallmayr, *The Other Heidegger* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 94.

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systems, however inchoately formed, to rely on (which is all there is anyway) in resisting morally oppressive pronouncements and behavior. What liberalism's adversaries need to view as an inescapable flaw in the light of their anti-skeptical premises (their logical and empirical vulnerability to vacuousness and a circular content) can be seen as a common fate shared by liberalism and its ideological opponents, which liberalism, construed in this particularly Levinasian way, helps to bring to light. In a multicultural political marketplace, liberalism under Levinas' tutelage has a negative hermeneutical key that enables it to evince its own theoretical and moral superiority, even while affirming the legitimacy and autonomy of heterogeneous sub-cultures constituted along different axiological axes.

Negative Theology, Liberalism and a Liberalized Concept of the Sacred

Machiavelli is an architect of institutional deferral. He says: "Those who blame the quarrels of the Senate and the people of Rome condemn that which was the very origin of liberty, and that they were probably more impressed by the cries and noise which these disturbances occasioned in the public places, than by the good effect which they produced; and that they do not consider that in every republic there are two parties, that of the nobles and that of the people; and all the laws that are favorable to liberty result from the opposition of these parties to each other."[34] In Machiavelli's political vision, the superiority of liberal democracy over a principality (one-man or one-party rule) is evinced by what a later generation of radical critics would call its methods of cooptation that allow it to integrate dissent and opposition within the formal channels of government, thereby staving off conspiracies and rebellions, and promoting the stability and longevity of the state. According legitimacy to one's opponents encourages them to stay above ground, to lobby for their grievances, and to eventually bargain with the full glare of the public on them rather than to go underground and to conspire to wrest power away. By fragmenting and deferring power, one's opponents are socialized to behave politically rather than conspiratorially. On a deep level, they are friend, and the enemy label is merely transitory.

It is not just checks and balances and separation of powers that have these beneficially cooptative effects. It is also the whole constitutional scheme of protection of rights (from the more primary rights enumerated

34. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince and The Discourses*; *The Prince*, tr. by Luigi Ricci; rev. by E. R. P. Vincent; *The Discourses* tr. by Christian E. Detmold (New York: Modern Library, 1940), *The Discourses*, Bk. I, Chap. 4, p. 119.

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in the First Amendment to the more secondary and instrumental rights listed elsewhere in the Bill of Rights) and the institutionalized tension struck between majority rule and minority rights that give individual and social outsiders their authoritatively acknowledged places within the regime's ongoing political transactions.

Liberalism reconceived as responding to the tug of infinity by way of accommodating dilemmas surrounding the skepticism present at its inception is no longer the liberalism of the popular imagination viewed as the great neutralizer and antidote to religion, but is instead seen as an expression of a certain type of religious sensibility, i.e., the negative theological, which in turn is expressive of the liberalization of the sacred. The strategic sociological and psychological advantages that accrue from this rearticulation of liberalism are that, if critics of liberalism are right in emphasizing the communally-and-traditionally-nurtured character of the self, then as long as one posits a duality between community and tradition, on the one hand, and the liberal *ethos,* on the other, then all attempts at a liberal embrace of tradition and community are doomed to incoherence and self-contradiction. To acknowledge the limitations of the liberal self and to self-consciously seek to rectify them by affirming the role of tradition and community in shaping the self does not mean that one has become a follower of tradition or has reembedded his life in a communal constellation of norms. On the contrary, by making a self-conscious choice in favor of tradition and community out of a heightened awareness of the flaws of the liberal self, one is behaving exactly as liberal individualism stipulates one does and should behave. When tradition and community are chosen, they are no longer tradition and community but represent the actions and moves of a liberal modern. The more one strives to transcend and move beyond liberalism, the more one's actions conform to the postulates of liberalism and defy the protocols of tradition and community.

To facilitate a liberal reappropriation of the norms of tradition and community requires that one be able to envision religion (conceived in the broadest possible terms as the supreme Western repository of the values of tradition and community) and liberalism as constituting a unity, rather than a dichotomy. The problematic of traditionalism (self-consciously affirming tradition) is circumvented if one is dealing with a unity rather than a dichotomy. The crucial question becomes from which direction to theorize the unity.

Two stark alternatives present themselves: to sacralize liberalism or to liberalize the sacred. Sacralizing liberalism has often meant noticing the

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religious roots and ambiance of the key values animating liberalism (such as respect for persons) and identifying the Judeo-Christian tradition or Judaism and Christianity separately as the suppressed premise in the liberal concept of the good. While the autonomy of liberalism as a cultural and political phenomenon is recognized, often the hope is expressed that the theological value-kernels of liberalism will lead to its *Aufhebung* in the form of a Judaized or Christianized liberalism that will self-consciously reconnect with its Jewish or Christian antecedents and openly consult their theological norms in resolving questions of public policy.[35] While the first perspective acknowledges that liberalism is separate from its theological background, the contrasting approach emphasizes that, on a sheerly theoretical level, Western monotheistic religion was never what it was touted to be. In rather dramatic and spectacular ways, the central tenets in the Western projection of God, when construed negative-theologically (which also goes back to the beginnings of Western speculation about God), exhibit direct continuity with (are part of the same story as) skepticism and its dilemmas. Thus, Maimonides sees Biblical law in ideological terms as performing the subsidiary, instrumental tasks of weaning the nascent Jewish community away from the religious practices of the surrounding nations, and cementing loyalty to an independent set of norms whose separateness validates and justifies Jewish nationhood. The alternative that Maimonides assiduously avoids is that these norms are justifiable intrinsically as being the word of God.[36]

In order to emerge as properly consistent, skeptical doctrine must encompass a reflexive maneuver whereby skeptical critical canons are turned against the tenets of skepticism themselves, forcing them into a movement of recoil and inhibiting their adequate formulation. Analogously, the utter conceptual removal of the monotheistic God, which renders him totally unlike anything human, requires some kind of grammatical subject concerning whom the continual divestiture of predicates can take place. Skepticism is a doctrine of radical critique that both presupposes and denies a stable subject (in a grammatical sense): tenets of skepticism. Monotheism is also a doctrine of radical critique that simultaneously presupposes and denies a stable grammatical subject, namely,

35. David Walsh's book, *The Growth of the Liberal Soul* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), is a good example of this with regard to Christianity.

36. Maimonides, *Guide*, II:33:364;III:45:575-79. References are to part, chapter, and page in the *Guide*. See the discussion in Botwinick, *Skepticism, Belief, and the Modern*, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-34.

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God. The strategy that seems most compelling for restoring coherence to both monotheism and skepticism is a generalized agnosticism (an agnostic approach extending across the whole map of knowledge, beyond the philosophy of religion) that clears a path for the deployment of multivalued logics. These logics, by creating space for more possibilities than just A and not-A, chart the suspension of the law of the excluded middle and thereby pave the way for circumventing the contradictions present in formulations of monotheism and skepticism. By stressing the untranslatability of God into any literally-construable concept or institution, monotheism grounds authority in consent, which becomes the organizing principle of political liberalism.

Catherine Pickstock, who turns to Catholic liturgy to compensate for the philosophical inadequacies of modernity, on one level can be read as theorizing the religious and secular components of the Western tradition as constituting a unity. But her embrace of liturgy is impaled on the horns of a dilemma. If she wants to sustain the pristineness and authenticity of Catholic liturgy, and insist that subsequent Western secular intellectual developments constitute a departure from it and that it is necessary to return to it in order to alleviate the present condition (if her faithfulness to Catholic tradition goads her into insisting on a dualistic reading of her argument), then Walsh's critique applies with equal force to her. But if she affirms a unitary reading of her argument that stresses the continuing coexistence or intermingling of the religious and the secular throughout Western history (if they occupy the same ontological space from the start), then the motif of "return to liturgy" is a rhetorical trope, since liturgy and secular modes of thought have been co-present all along.

As a species of rhetoric, "liturgy" is extremely vulnerable. One cannot project oneself willfully into a position of experiencing personal or social life liturgically, even if the liturgical mode of apprehending or relating to reality seems philosophically compelling. "The liturgical consummation of philosophy" suggests that Pickstock is making a modernist move. "The liturgical consummation of philosophy" is philosophy, not liturgy. Even as rhetoric, this is not tradition but traditionalism. She is invoking religion to render more coherent a project of self-reflection characteristic of modernity, rather than re-appropriating the tradition of ancient liturgy. "Liturgy" as a response to a modernist puzzle (or series of puzzles) generated by an intense philosophical self-consciousness is qualitatively distinct from "liturgy" as experienced by Plato's contemporaries or even by a present-day Catholic whose consciousness has not been seared by philosophical

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perplexity. To utilize the Derridaean vocabulary Pickstock abhors, "liturgy" connotes an absence rather than a presence. From a Maimonidean perspective, "liturgy" needs to be construed in a negative hermeneutical vein. It is a verbal token or marker standing for the intractable issues that provoke recourse to itself, rather than conjuring up, in a literal sense, the sociological and religious phenomenon called liturgy. "Liturgy" is a complex and circuitous way of registering "not-liturgy."

Pickstock can be faulted also for using the notion of "the liturgical" in too broad and sweeping a sense to encompass both the polytheistic liturgical practices she cites from Plato's *Laws* and the celebration of the Mass within Catholicism, which is one dominant stream of Western monotheism. Under whatever set of historical and theological auspices she interprets the Mass, she must take into account in some way how Jesus' role within Christian theology is in tension with the absolute distancing of God posited by monotheism. The liturgical in a monotheistic setting of whatever variety has to partake more of the character of the metaphoric than when it is situated in a Greek polytheistic setting. Part of the attraction of liturgy in a pagan environment is that it facilitates an uncomplicated release of ecstasy by placing individuals in contact with the literally accessible numinous source of being. Monotheism metaphorizes that contact, so that its liturgy presupposes partial redemption heavily dependent on human initiative, and does so more dramatically than it does visions of total redemption. In a crucial sense, monotheistic liturgy prefigures the partial amelioration characteristic of liberalism, rather than the utopian deliverance linking polytheistic liturgy with totalitarianism.

Even if the issue of Pickstock's mixing of polytheistic and monotheistic forms of liturgy could somehow be resolved, there is still the question of why she singles out the Roman Rite as the unique embodiment of "the liturgical." Does she intend for the whole world to convert to it, rather than striving to encourage people to actualize its correlatives within their own differing religious communities' particular traditions? Pickstock speaks about Catholicism as being "uniquely able to mediate the local and the universal" or, alternatively, about how "in Christianity, the spirit and the body are sacrificed together in order that the spirit and body together might be received back again on the eschatological morning."[37] But this is very close to the way practicing Jews have traditionally theorized their observance of Jewish ritual. In the theological idiom of Leo Baeck, every

37. Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 273.

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commandment in Judaism masks a connection with a Divine mystery, and every mystery, in order to be stabilized out of moments of ecstatic rapture, must yield its commandment(s).[38] By engaging in Mitzvot (fulfilling Divine commandments), the Jew elevates and transforms different moments of his daily life — from the way he gets up in the morning to the way he treats strangers — and thus achieves that optimal degree of redemption that his life is capable of sustaining. The structure and content of Jewish law are evocative of what Max Kaddushin has called "normal mysticism." This term signifies the theological approach developed by the Rabbis, whereby the radical otherness of God emphasized by Biblical theology is domesticated and integrated into a complex fabric of daily living. Without sacrificing God's total Otherness, his total distinctness from human beings, the way in which the ordinary Jew relates to it has been normalized. "Through the agency of Halakah [Jewish Law]," writes Kaddushin, "prayer becomes the thrice-daily practice of the people as a whole; *Berakot* [blessings] are now the means, on innumerable occasions, of evoking a consciousness of God . . . ; the call to *Teshubah*, repentance, becomes the function of annually recurring days, indeed, it is embodied in the Daily '*Amidah*' [the central portion of the daily prayers]."[39] Because of the marginalized role that Jesus plays in Muslim theology, there are clear analogues to the Jewish sense of the liturgical in non-ecstatic, non-mystical versions of Islam as well.

In fairness to Pickstock, perhaps her preference for the Roman Rite as the supreme expression of the liturgical has to do with Carl Gustav Jung's argument concerning how the Christological myth is the optimal myth for advancing human individuation in a Western context.[40] According to Jung, the mythical reenactment of the death and rebirth of Christ symbolically encodes for the participant the need to countenance and, on some deep psychological level, to experience the death of the self before the self can be reborn as fully individuated — fully capable of nurturing and sustaining the burden of its own individuality. Presumably, only a self that has experienced its own death and rebirth can establish forms of community that are not psychologically and politically destructive. Even if one concedes this point, if the question for Jung and Pickstock becomes one of choosing the

38. Leo Baeck, *Judaism and Christianity — Five Essays* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1958).

39. Max Kaddushin, *The Rabbinic Mind* (New York: Bloch, 1972), p. 301.

40. Carl G. Jung, "Christ, a Symbol of the Self," in *Aion*, tr. by R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).

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most fruitful and productive myth to guide life, then the domains of "tradition," "community," and "the liturgical" have been left far behind.

Those seeking to abolish the dualism between religion and liberalism by sacralizing liberalism confront the problem that, instead of resolving the dilemma of traditionalism, they have merely pushed it further back to the early generations of formulators and receivers of monotheistic doctrine. If their works and lives are scrutinized from up close, one finds that there is no basis for foreclosing a reading suggesting that for them as well tradition represents a willful assumption — a self-conscious choice — of norms that, all things considered, seem attractive to them, rather than an envelopment by an outlook and a way of life whose naturalness and irresistibility make conformity appear like spontaneous, unpremeditated acquiescence. The problems encountered by the sacralizers of liberalism resemble those confronting communitarian critics of liberalism. When examined closely, the monoliths of "tradition" and "community" usually stand exposed as tissues of "traditionalisms" — multiple, self-conscious acts of individual affirmation. "Tradition" and "community" are terms often applied *ex post facto* to what were at the time of their actual occurrence manifold self-conscious interventions by individuals goaded by the tensions introduced between the values and loyalties they were brought up with and the alternative ways of ordering the world with which they came in contact during their young adulthood and maturity. Sometimes people are motivated to affirm their older values and loyalties in the face of later challenges, and a "summing" of these self-conscious affirmations gets denominated by such collectivist, irrationalist terms as "tradition" and "community." But such terms often belie a Kantian abstraction from the immediate circumstances of the self in order to facilitate a traditionalistic, self-conscious affirmation of the past. Communitarians are not sufficiently aware of the complexity of the dialectic of affirmation and rebellion — not only (as they perceive) rebellion using the conceptual tools of tradition, of affirmation, but the very conceptual tools of tradition itself as the reification and residue of multiple individual acts of rebellion (of transcending the givenness of one's situation) conceived and realized as tradition — in creating the fabrics of tradition and community.

By pushing the dilemma of traditionalism to the remote reaches of antiquity, those seeking to sacralize liberalism have merely put the dualism between tradition and liberalism at a safe historical distance without resolving it. The virtue of the contrasting approach of liberalizing the sacred is that the category of the sacred helps to register an ideal limit of

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thought (an idealized possibility) without pretending to reflect a real feature of the world. Liberalism's beckoning toward infinity through all of its mechanisms of displacement and deferral just constitutes another manifestation of its institutionalized agnosticism — a stance constrained by its lack of knowledge, which requires it to be open to all possibilities.

How can tradition be reappropriated if it consists largely of an absence? The formal categories of human self-understanding and of social and political thought are invested with content through a collective doing and shaping whose unity is established on negative grounds: by a resistance to an essentialist reading of what the organizing categories of individual and collective life enjoin. This understanding results in turning tradition on its head, in inverting the traditional concept of tradition. Tradition is not what is retrieved and revivified from a privileged historical moment or text, but what is produced in the face of an increasingly public and common awareness of the precariousness and transience of all moments, and the fragility and evanescence of all texts. From a generalized agnostic standpoint, tradition needs to be seen not as retrospective, but as prospective: as a halting, tentative communal doing predicated on collective ignorance in multiple areas of theoretical probing and practical affairs, a strategic reticence and withdrawal in the face of the central questions of human life. In a generalized agnostic vein, the intellectual substratum of tradition is a negative bracketing and deliteralizing of most theoretical formulations. Its emotional environment consists in acclimation to a collective waiting, the unceasing registering of absence, the calibration of a "not yet" that bridges the beginning with the end of time.

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Liturgy and Postmodernism

Paul Gottfried

I

Catherine Pickstock's project of returning to community by means of the Roman Rite (the Latin Mass) betrays a paradox that runs throughout her presentation.[1] Her defense of liturgical community entails a conscious rejection of the sirens of postmodernism: she argues that the breakdown of fixed meanings, particularly with regard to theological truths, originates in the modernist enterprise predicated on individual will and self-centered secularism. Postmodernists are allegedly the offspring, albeit often unrecognized, of the modernist disaster. Thus they perpetuate modernism's anti-communal, anti-religious and subjectivist perspective.

Yet, Pickstock seems steeped in the same postmodernism she links in a common pattern of sin with the modernist turn. This becomes evident, notwithstanding her sound and learned observations about the Roman Rite. She notes that this inherited liturgy aims both at experiencing the transcendent and at instilling a sense of solidarity through shared participation in the source of being. Her incorporation of Platonic and Neoplatonic imagery and her references to the *Phaedrus* are appropriate here. Those who put together the form of worship that became known as the Roman Rite were familiar with ancient mystical traditions and the Platonic view of knowing as *mathesis tes ousias*. Pickstock is also correct in assuming that the Rite, as a piecemeal, architectonic creation, shows design in the ways its parts are put together. Thus, it makes sense to ask why a particular psalm was placed in the *Introits* or why a certain line appears in the canon just before the raising of the Host. One may also want to inquire, as Pickstock does,

1. See Catherine Pickstock, "Liturgy and Modernity," in this issue of *Telos*.

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why the *Gloria* is sung near the beginning and not at the end of the Rite, or why a doxology is deemed necessary at all. The Rite came to be defined as a true sacrifice between the Fourth Lateran Council and the third session of the Council of Trent. The Eucharist, which lies at its heart, is said to demonstrate the mystery of transubstantiation: for the worshipper, the wafer and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Christ.

As Pickstock emphasizes, both the doctrinal background and thematic structure of the Roman Rite are important for anyone trying to understand its spiritual and communal aspects. But the kind of language in which she couches her inquiries is problematic. For example, does she describe the explicit intention of those who composed or prescribed the doxology when she offers this explanation: "the willing subordination to the surprise of what arrives alone genuinely liberates the worshiper from the deconstitutive assumption of autonomy, epistemological certainty and self-presence of secular existence"? By "confessing faith, the worshiper's subjectivity is enacted and fulfilled." This interpretive idiom, applied especially to the *Gloria Patri* and the Nicene Creed, leans heavily on a text repeatedly cited by Pickstock: Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition.* Despite her expressed reservations about postmodernism, she keeps returning to Lyotard for statements on how narrative creates communal consciousness. Though this supposedly is done in order to move beyond postmodernist authors, much of their language is taken along. Thus, Pickstock seizes upon Lyotardian phrases in offering this characterization of the worshipping "I" in the Roman Rite: "a being involved in self-dispossessing acts of doxological impersonation who displaces the sense of enclosed autonomy in the subject in favor of that which is impersonated." She then glosses a passage from the Rite referring to the merits of the saints, by suggesting that this reference causes the statues in the church to live in the mind of the worshipper. "Mute, lifeless, possibly sculpted beings are invoked as spokesmen and makers by the speaking worshiper who prays to be thus remade by their defense and protection."

Several paragraphs later, after extended asides devoted to Walter Benjamin and Hannah Arendt, Pickstock inexorably comes back to Lyotard in a discussion of "the decentering of the strategic voice" and the "adoption of the satiric poetic genre." Before long, in comes Bertolt Brecht, whose *Verfremdungseffekt* is used to explain the liturgical function of "defamiliarization," as are various Russian literary theorists. All of these authorities are consulted to clarify how the Roman Rite prevents the worshipper from lapsing into recitation by rote. The creation of distance

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and the use of "satire" are both devices for making the worshipper rivet on what is being said and to avoid mere lip service.

These allusions and asides are certainly impressive, and testify to Pickstock's amazing erudition. Yet, her analytic method is unsettling. Does this study of liturgical rhetoric and its intended effect, done by way of working through and presumably overcoming late-modernist and post-modernist authors, demonstrate the connections being posited? Are there solid truths to be grasped at the end of this speculative journey propelled by postmodernist theorizing? As for the social-cultural critique attached to her treatise on liturgy, here too one may be justified in asking hard questions. While it is altogether fitting to contrast the present social fragmentation with a liturgical vision of harmony through faith, does this vision offer a practical alternative to the current historical situation? This question should be posed, seeing that Pickstock offers her comments on liturgy partly as a solution for socio-political ills. It is unlikely that a myriad of simultaneously recited masses will prevail against the evening news or the President's meanderings on sensitive gender-neutral, non-homophobic, non-racist behavior. In fact, Roman Rites are being recited even now in many places, and while such services may have a deep spiritual effect on the attendees, their overall social impact seems insignificant.

It is also doubtful that Pickstock will make her views palatable to hyper-modernist intellectuals by applying Lyotardian seasoning. If a subjectivist and self-consciously arbitrary hermeneutic is what is supposed to be shed, then Lyotard and his acolytes are the problem, not the solution. In any case, a radically anti-traditionalist deconstructionism is unlikely to uphold the truth claim to which Pickstock's own tradition is bound. After all, she is undertaking more than a mere hermeneutic exercise. She is defending what she takes to be objectively true, and to that extent she must part company with a certain kind of anti-modernism as well as with most deconstructionists. Truth claims are integral to the "liturgical consummation" that Pickstock praises, whereas anti-modernism is not an argument in favor of the articles of belief either contained or reflected in the Rite. It is hard to imagine how, by reciting in large groups the Nicene or Athanasian Creed, everyone will become more socially responsible. Though Pickstock does not say this will be an inevitable result of the public recitation of creeds, those who look toward a liturgical renewal of community may be led to this conclusion. Another question is whether one can return to tradition *in general* or can abandon an already experienced culture for some privileged moment in the past. To put matters candidly, modernism is

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today's tradition, however much one may deplore it. For some modernists, though not for others, the Roman Rite is what it claims to be: collections of true dogma and a true sacrifice, through which Jesus Christ offers Himself in the eucharistic elements. But whether one accepts such teachings should depend on conditions other than being fed up with one's time. Being unhappy with the *Zeitgeist* may accompany the acceptance of a particular religious revelation, but it is not a telling reason for embracing it.

Another point that merits discussion is whether Pickstock unfairly marginalizes a large chunk of Christian tradition. While her theological preference is incarnational and Anglo-Catholic, much of the Christian world since the late Middle Ages has inclined in a different direction. Those Christians who reject transubstantiation have also lived in communities and have experienced their own type of redemptive faith. A tradition of transcendental theology in which God reveals Himself as absolute otherness has a long, rich history, from the Hebrew Bible through Neoplatonism to Reformed Christianity.

Aryeh Botwinick tries to demonstrate a pervasive "radical monotheist" influence on Western thought since the advent of late medieval nominalism. Whatever the limitations of his wide-ranging analysis, Botwinick does make a credible argument that belief in a sovereign but remote Deity has been a widely-held Western idea.[2] As a believer in such a God, whom he thinks revealed Himself to biblical prophets but few others, Botwinick would have no truck with the "pantheistic speculation" that he finds in Pickstock. Indeed as an Orthodox Rabbi, Botwinick might take an even dimmer view than the ancient Jews of the attempt to depict the holy in human or animal form.[3]

From the standpoint of a theology stressing divine otherness and divine ineffability, Pickstock's endorsements of the Roman Rite must be

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2. Aryeh Botwinick, *Skepticism, Belief and the Modern* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997). Botwinick is sometimes reckless in associating his label with thinkers who can be easily assigned to more than one school of thought. A detailed analysis would have to mention his carelessness in confusing nominalism with the *via negativa* and in ascribing to skeptics a fideistic form of thinking that is not always demonstrated.

3. The Hebrew in Exodus XX and the Aramaic translation of Onkeles are both explicit in condemning pictorial and three-dimensional representations of anything (presumably living) found in heaven or on earth. *Pesel (Telem)* and *Temunah (dmuth)*, i.e., statuary and pictures, are equally suspect; and bowing down before them is prohibited as an ungodly act. Rabbinical Judaism, as can be seen from the relevant medieval compendia, goes beyond scriptural prohibitions in "building a fence" around the temptation to image-making. Many Orthodox legal scholars prohibit the taking of photographs of themselves, lest these images become objects of veneration and contribute to "idolatry" (*avodah zorah*).

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rejected as being akin to the Dionysian festival. It is an attempt to bring God down into the human sphere and to experience Him in a public act of intimacy. Other theological traditions which Christian thinkers and communities have accepted are different from this particular way of thinking about God. Despite Pickstock's appeal to an authoritative "sacramental Christianity," she begins and ends with a *preferred* Christian tradition.

It may be too much to ask that examples be provided of a society that Pickstock would find acceptable morally and liturgically. Does one exist anywhere? One may assume from her tone that she is not replicating the Socratic exercise characterizing the *Republic*, proving that absolute justice exists only in Heaven and that humans may harm themselves by overreaching in pursuit of an unattainable ideal. This, in any case, is how Paul Friedländer plausibly interprets the totally regimented collective existence in Plato's first full delineation of an ideal society. This polity, based on the quest for justice, is viewed as an extended illustration of *eironeia*.[4] If Pickstock seeks to offer a more practical blueprint for living together, it would be helpful to have her give relevant examples. One hopes these will not be contemporary secular socialist states on which she is throwing holy water. Finally, let her demonstrate a connection between the kind of traditionalist liturgy she defends and the social arrangements she approves of. How, bluntly put, does the first contribute to the second or the second to the first? What, if any, correlation between these two can she cite to prove that by pursuing liturgical restoration of the type she desires it becomes possible to move toward a more just or more truly organic society?

II

Pickstock's project is part of the program of "Radical Theology," which she shares with her mentor John Milbank. Both can be criticized for overstatement as well as for their proposed alternatives to modernity. Milbank equates liberal capitalism and an ethic of undivided responsibility with fascism or Nazism.[5] Capitalist markets are often accompanied by "nostalgia for a state of nature" and the search for a "compensatory social organicism to which it [the state of nature] hopes the economy can finally

4. See Paul Friedländer, *Plato*, tr. by Hans Meyerhoff (New York: Pantheon, 1969). While Friedländer is particularly struck by the ironic intent of *Republic* V, 458b, namely the comparison between human eugenics and bird-and-dog-breeding, he also cites copious passages for comic relief. Clearly, in *Politics* II, Aristotle took seriously Plato's political proposals, as he did Plato's epistemology in the *Metaphysics*.

5. See John Milbank, "The Politics of Time: Community, Gift and Liturgy," in this issue of *Telos*.

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be subordinated. This goal it shares with fascism." Moreover, "Kantian liberal humanist logic and Nazi logic are seamlessly linked," while the theologian Jacob Rogozinski is believed to have demonstrated that "the holocaust was the supreme consummation of secularity."

In Milbank's comments about capitalist market reprises, he refers to the orthodox Marxist argument that fascists are defenders of the capitalist jungle who appeal to nostalgic communal symbols in order to stave off socialist reconstruction. But most late capitalist societies have evolved in ways understood better by Weber and Schumpeter, i.e., they have turned into bureaucratically-organized social democracies, which today seems to be the case throughout much of the Western world. While it is unfair to blame Christianity for explicitly anti-Christian horrors, Nazism and its crimes do not represent the inescapable result of "secularity." Most modern secular societies are peaceful as well as de-spiritualized, whereas the Nazis worked assiduously and quite consciously to create and to propagate non-Christian religious myths based on Nordic legends. Significantly, Christian societies of the past did not consistently show the respect for the Other exalted by Milbank as a Christian virtue. Such bloodbaths as the Crusades and the religious wars of the early modern period took place with Christian combatants, many of whom attended Roman Rites and, at least outwardly, assented to the articles of faith contained therein.

The attempt to draw lines from Kant's notion of moral autonomy, as expounded in the *Metaphysics of Morals,* to Adolf Eichmann's license for genocide is perhaps the most unconvincing part of Milbank's brief against the post-medieval world. Although such a view might apply (albeit not necessarily) to Eichmann, Kant does not preach "the idolization of human freedom whatever its elections and the absolute rightness of whatever legislates without exception." As explained in the *Metaphysics of Morals,* ethical instruction "does not come from the observation of oneself and ones animal nature nor from any perception of the course of the world in terms of what happens or how one should act; rather, it is reason that dictates how to behave, even if there is no [outward] example to be found or advantage to be gained."[6] What Kant teaches as the condition for freedom is total submission to an ethical will that features a universal content. Such behavior does not and cannot lead to the acceptance of any "*de facto* exercise of sovereignty," no matter how outrageous, but assumes a legal system protecting property and persons. Milbank would do well to consult the

6. Immanuel Kant, *Werke*, ed. by Ernst Cassirer (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer Verlag, 1916), Vol. VII, p. 22.

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second part of Kant's *Rechtslehre* (1797) devoted to public law. There he would find that a Kantian regime defends contracts and property, and is not about justifying mass murder as an expression of individual autonomy.[7]

Beyond this tendency to reach for extreme rhetoric, the liturgical critique of modernity does not pose truly serious political alternatives. Instead of the corrupting cash nexus (which Milbank may not tolerate in his liturgical society), there will be economic exchanges "where the product is also regarded as a gift." "Of course a free market would remain," Milbank adds, but "the exchange entered into must also represent . . . a truly shared benefit and a bonding." "Cooperative banks and financial courts . . . would advise continually [and in extreme cases legislate and execute] on the range of fair prices, fair profits and fair capital returns."

Despite Milbank's appeal to a shared "liturgical sense" and a "syndicalist ethos," his policy statements sound painfully familiar. They bear a family resemblance to what is done by a collectivist, managerial economy. The defenders of an economy thus described blame individual interest for social problems and look to public administration as the solution, Unlike the fallen human society described by St. Paul in Romans XIV, where magistrates bear the sword to punish the violent, Milbank's *communitas sanctorum* will consist of financial courts set up to punish violators of fixed wages and prices. To the extent that this socialist arrangement differs from the collectivist model now in operation, it does not seem likely to capture the heights of power. Though there is already state control of behavior and much of the economy, this control most definitely is not Judeo-Christian. It aims at displacing traditional social morality with an atomized, consumerist culture, and encourages lifestyles (or punishes opposition to them) that must offend Christian traditionalists. Still, it is unclear why Anglo-Catholic socialist communitarians imagine that the current authority will step aside to make room for their syndicalist vision, or why an activist democratic majority can be collected to put their own plans into effect.

Devolution is essential for meaningful political life, be it democratic, traditionalist, or both. But this requires breaking away from the present Western model of nation-states colonized by administrators and social workers. Though Milbank is correct to note the overweening individualism (reminiscent of Ayn Rand) behind the ideology, he should treat libertarians with at least the same indulgence he bestows on socialists. Notwithstanding their amoral and materialist outlook, libertarians serve a valuable

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 61-114.

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function by flailing away at the central state. They are right in their choice of political enemies, even if their invincible ignorance is sometimes maddening. Only by delegitimating centralized public administration is it possible to enact alternative political forms. Christian socialists, with or without a liturgical sense, will come around in this matter, once they have ceased to believe that Blair, Clinton, Jospin or other social democratic centralizers will cut them a deal, in between introducing partial birth abortion, multiculturalism, gay marriages and other social reforms to which the socialist Left and its administrative arm are now dedicated.

Along with Pickstock's *After Writing*,[8] Milbank's *Theology and Social Theory* is an impressive breakthrough in the history of both social theory and social institutions.[9] It gives proper weight to the role of theology and religious attitudes in examining the social sciences and stresses secularity as the shaping theme of postmedieval thought, even for thinkers professing to be Catholic counter-revolutionaries. But most of modern history has been marked by attitudes and institutions that have been weakened by hyper-modernity, from cohesive families with well-defined gender roles to Protestant biblical morality and a *Rechtsstaat* leaving almost all social interaction beyond state administrative control. Though it may be possible to construct connections between a traditional bourgeois society and the socially-engineered, open-borders world of Blair and Clinton, the discontinuities here are at least equally apparent. At what point does one abandon the search for traceable links between past and present, and remark the novelty of those political, economic, and cultural transformations of which one is an observer? Corresponding to this is the related question of whether the premodern past can be brought back *mutatis mutandis* to remedy late modern discontents.

8. Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (London: Blackwell, 1998).

9. John Millbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1993); and by the same author, *The World Made Strange: Theology, language and Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997).

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Walter Benjamin on Liturgical Embodiment

Nicholas Adams

An unusual aspect of Walter Benjamin's work is the provocative way he uses theology in tackling "theoretical" questions. While it is difficult to write about Benjamin without dealing with his relation to the Jewish tradition, in studies of his work surprisingly little attention is paid to theological questions. This is not to ignore the many accounts of Benjamin's interest in the Kabbala, his "theological" writings on language, or his messianic imagery. However, whereas for Benjamin theological concerns are central, this is rarely true of his commentators. While some have confronted Benjamin's theology, until recently this has often been done by scholars whose philosophical acumen far outstrips their theological education.[1]

The theme of "embodiment" in Benjamin's writings is indicative of his theological concerns as well as his belief that religious practices are superseded by a transformed politics. Benjamin did not neglect *rituals*. In fact, his main ideas about understanding the presentation or production of meaning have to do with ritual embodiment. One possible reason for this is that rituals have an explicitly cognitive dimension. Benjamin was not merely interested in paradoxes surrounding the production of meaning. He was also concerned with the idea of an embodied subjectivity that arises in the combined action of rhythmic ordering and cognitive articulation. His idea of political embodiment embraces a practical activity that

1. This is most obvious when authors try to distill the "philosophical" content of Benjamin's theological language and discard the residue. See Jürgen Habermas, "The Relevance of Walter Benjamin," in *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, tr. by F. G. Lawrence (London: Heinemann, 1983); Rolf Tiedemann, "Historical Materialism or Political Messianism? An Interpretation of The Theses 'On The Concept of History'," in *Benjamin: Philosophy, History, Aesthetics*, ed. by Gary Smith (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989); Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption* (New York: Gilford, 1982).

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seamlessly fuses language's double ability to perform aesthetic world-disclosure and cognitive problem-solving. In short, Benjamin is this century's most sophisticated Marxist liturgist.

Taking theological concerns seriously is unusual. The "modern" story of the "loss of aura" visited upon works of art, traditions and ways of life, to borrow Benjamin's own phrase, extends to the heart of contemporary social theory and philosophy. Even though philosophy exposes the dubious means by which theology was shouted down by foundationalist rationalism, it goes along with the consequences of those shouts, even if it does not recognize their validity. Benjamin himself remarked dryly that "these days" (1940) theology "is meek and subdued, and really shouldn't be seen in public."[2] To take theology seriously under these conditions runs the risk of seeming, at best, nostalgic and, at worst intellectually dishonest. However, interesting developments in contemporary Jewish philosophy make the charge of intellectual dishonesty harder to pursue, and show that the issues are important enough to warrant rehearsal before an audience less accustomed to theology.[3] Nonetheless, Benjamin himself acknowledges that various dimensions of social action, once understood in explicitly theological terms, have undergone significant changes and that different ways of understanding the world have taken their place. For convenience, these dimensions might be distinguished as questions of story-telling, embodied polity, and ritual, or, in more overtly theological language, as revelation, church, and liturgy.

Benjamin was profoundly interested in all of these "theological" dimensions. Although there has been considerable study of the first (examining Benjamin's essays which treat the themes of story-telling, "profane illumination," and his insistence that "modern" experience is mediated less by narrative and more by visual images), his attention to political embodiment and ritual has been relatively neglected. This may be explained in part by the fact that, along with Adorno, Benjamin was much more familiar with the theological trends of his time than were later generations of cultural critics. As a result, Benjamin's more ecclesial or liturgical interests seem alien to post-war social theory. Nevertheless, Benjamin considered these issues vital and made them integral to his overall approach. In each of the three theological dimensions, he diagnoses the passing-away of traditional structures, not as a nostalgic recall of a golden era, but as an open acknowledgement of what is truly lost, in order to formulate more

2. Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974), Vol. I, p. 693.

3. A good example is Robert Gibbs, *Correlations in Rosenzweig and Levinas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

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clearly the task confronting humanity. Benjamin's theoretical meditations are best viewed as an attempt to renew possibilities which have remained unrealized. This can be readily seen by examining the image of "the body," recurring throughout Benjamin's writing in its various forms.

Loss of a Body

Much of Benjamin's work can be read as a Jewish response to a commonplace in reflections on modernity — the fragmentation of social and ethical life. Jews of Benjamin's generation felt that the their parents' willingness to assimilate into German society had left them with an impoverished sense of their religious traditions and cultural heritage. One of the most significant results of this change was that Jewish authors found themselves writing for a readership that did not necessarily share a common background and whose familiarity with particular historical objects (such as sacred texts) could not be taken for granted.[4] Of course, triggered by the increasing distance from the continuities of tradition, the crisis confronted European Jews and Christians. The crisis of Jewish self-understanding in relation to its corporate structures of worship came later than the Christian reformations of the 1500s. The marginalization of Jews from mainstream society had the effect of preserving their traditional structures. In 1791 France, however, Jews were accorded equal civil status (at least in law) and over the next hundred years this slowly took effect in other countries, including Germany. By the end of the 19th century, the political assimilation of Jews in Germany had gathered considerable momentum, although it had been generated partly by the rationalism that followed in the wake of the pantheism controversy at the turn of the century.[5] As a consequence, the 19th century's "rational" integration of Jews introduced them to an apparently plural society that had no obvious interest in historical reading and writing. In short, Jews in Western Europe purchased integration at the price of abandoning their theology.

For Benjamin, this Jewish theological and cultural dispossession had parallels with the crisis of Christianity during the Reformation. The increasing plurality of the modern European state and the inclusion of

4. See, e.g., Hannah Arendt's introduction to Walter Benjamin's *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, tr. by Harry Zohn (London: Fontana, 1992), p. 43; and the remarks about the effects of fragmentation on Jewish self-consciousness in Susan Handelman, *Fragments of Redemption: Jewish Thought and Literary Theory in Benjamin, Scholem and Levinas* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 13.

5. For a discussion of this debate see Frederick Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (London: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 44ff.

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Jews into the mainstream of civil life made certain accommodations possible at the cost of a fragmentation of two religious traditions, whose uneasy cohabitation had for hundreds of years maintained their mutual distinctiveness, perhaps even in opposition to each other. After Luther's 1517 theses and the 1791 revolution, this (admittedly difficult) cohabitation gradually gave way to assimilation — a process that generated a number of problems of theological and political self-understanding for both Christians and Jews. This may help explain why, for 20th century Jewish figures, the explicit use of theological language is partly a political statement. The distinction between, and blurring of, "political" and "theological" categories is most visible in Benjamin's language of the body. The "body" is an image that not only permits but fosters confusion about the relation of individuals to their society. Benjamin's remarks about bodies and subjectivity can be understood as part of a perennial theological enterprise: the search for a body in the wake of its loss.[6]

Embodiment

For Benjamin, the notion that thought is tied to language and that language is socially bound goes back through Humboldt and Hamann to Condillac and Diderot. His reflections concerning the transmission of embodied language — handed-down possibilities for collective thoughts, words and deeds — has been described by Julian Roberts in terms of a threefold process.[7] First, Benjamin traces the outlines of a practice in the era of premodernity. Loosely, this is the realm of what is lost. Second, he shows the prophetic reconfiguration of this practice in the work of certain late 19th century figures, who manage, at considerable personal cost, to anticipate a practice appropriate to modernity. Third, he suggests an embodiment of this practice in new structures of political organization.

Benjamin marks the passing of the old while celebrating the possibilities of the new. In minute detail, he administers the last rites for aura, cult and community. What results is the problem of modernity. The breakdown of old forms leads to a melancholic awareness of loss, which must then be followed by a new, technologically and politically mediated embodiment, in a threefold move from the sacred to the profane to a new fusion of the two — all the while informed by explicitly theological categories. The new

6. For the notion of the "loss of body," in the sense of a body politic and a body of tradition, see Michel de Certeau's analysis of early Christianity in *The Mystic Fable,* tr. by M. B. Smith (London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 81.

7. Julian Roberts *Walter Benjamin* (Cambridge: Polity, 1982), p. 176.

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profane is not the denial of the sacred, but its secular reconfiguration. This helps explain the proliferation of terms usually found in theology, and their juxtaposition with the technological in Benjamin's mature work.[8]

For Benjamin, a true body is the subject of experience and is capable of work. His fundamental thesis in *Der Erzähler* (1936) is that in pre-modern times work and meaningful experience accompanied each other, because of established social arrangements (in small communities) and the subtle structures that enabled events to become meaningful, above all in the telling of stories.[9] Work and experience, as Benjamin says repeatedly, must be ordered according to a rhythm. The organization of time and space can take many forms, of course, but it is only a *rhythmic* arrangement that can endow their contents with a meaning that can be lived and reproduced. A set of binary oppositions enables him to set out what he means by this. Rhythm determines the way in which different *repetitions* are ordered.[10] Pre-modern times, in Benjamin's parody of history, enjoyed the free repetition — the improvised retelling of stories — and organized its time according to a varied "rhythm of work."[11] By contrast, modernity finds itself beset by a "strict repetition" of facts (rather than stories) and forms of work, whose rhythm is the invariant "movement of machinery,"[12] where each event in the manufacturing process is

8. Benjamin's relation to these terms is never articulated simply, and certainly never explicitly. For a sample of various different interpretations, see Habermas, "The Relevance of Walter Benjamin," *op. cit.*, p. 144; Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics* (Hassocks: The Harvester Press, 1977), p. 78; Rodolphe Gasché, "Objective Diversions: On Some Kantian Themes in Benjamin's 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'," in *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy: Destruction and Experience*, ed. by Andrew Benjamin and Peter Osborn (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 185

9. For a discussion of these issues, see Marcus Bullock, "Three Headstones: Recent Books on Walter Benjamin," in *New German Critique* 39 (Fall 1986), pp 219-232; and Martin Jay "Experience without a Subject: Walter Benjamin and the Novel," in *The Actuality of Walter Benjamin*, a special edition of *New Foundations* 20 (Summer 1993).

10. The most probable influences on Benjamin are Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) and Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927). Freud's notion of compulsive repetition — a "conservative," "instinctual" practice — was familiar to Benjamin, as was Heidegger's use of repetition. For Heidegger, repetition is the positive task of creatively laying hold of the past, the principal hero who achieves such a poetic awakening of tradition being Hölderlin. Benjamin, who declared himself antagonistic to Heidegger's work, seems to play off Freud against Heidegger. He is concerned with neither a predominantly individualist focus nor the singular biological organism, such as the compulsively repeating infant; he wishes rather to draw attention to organic, bodily forms of creative repetition, which allow the past to become constitutive of experience in such a way as to include a positive transformation of the industrial and technological processes peculiar to late capitalism.

11. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 447.

12. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 633.

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indistinguishable from the last. Whereas a proper work rhythm provides a framework within which a rich and integrated experience (*Erfahrung*) is woven, the modern situation is "content-free" and produces mostly only fragmented experience (*Erlebnis*), whose dominating stimulus is the shock.[13] The continuity of past and present, supported by narrative repetitions and ritual remembrances, is lost with the advent of clocks and calibrated, linear time.[14] The free repetition of storytelling and meaningful experience is gradually being replaced by the "strict repetition" of industrial processes and disjunct experiences. In the discussions of Leskov, Kafka and others, Benjamin emphasizes repeatedly that 1936 was an historical vantage point from which to view the passing away of this "free" embodied time.

It is important to appreciate Benjamin's litany over "what has passed" and to judge his concern with failures, beauty and aura appropriately. The two terms that most clearly denote the contrast Benjamin seeks to draw are two different words for experience: *Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis*.[15] *Erfahrung* is experience embedded in a context. It is produced by an embracing structure that orders events and makes them meaningful. Paradigmatically, for Benjamin this occurs in the story and in the pre-modern place of work. By contrast, *Erlebnis* is experience that lacks any order and, as a consequence, is bereft of meaning. It is more like "stimulus." Benjamin himself sometimes speaks explicitly in this way when he uses words such as *Reizaufnahme, Reizbewältigung and Reizwirkung.*[16] The clearest way to explain this contrast is by example and, accordingly, a substantial part of *Der Erzähler* is given over to typical instances of *Erlebnis* in order to give the reader a clear indication where contemporary critique should focus. If Benjamin's essay has a plot, it is that the experience and intention

13. *Erfahrung* is experience that comes about through the production of meaning, whereas *Erlebnis* lacks this meaning. See Roberts, *Walter Benjamin*, *op. cit.*, pp. 187-188; and Andrew Benjamin, *The Problems of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 127ff.

14. This is a theme that runs throughout Benjamin's work from the excursus, inspired by Bergson, on clock time in the *Trauerspiel* study (*Gesammelte Schriften*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 274-275) to the final remarks in the *Theses* (Vol. I, pp. 701-702) on the difference between calendars and clocks.

15. In his sketch of the history of *Erlebnis* in *Truth and Method*, Gadamer notes that the word became common only in the 1870s as a substantive form of the verb *erleben*, which means something like "to be still alive when something happens." See Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. I (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1986), p. 66. This somewhat minimal kind of "experience" ties in neatly with Benjamin's use of the word. Gadamer does not make reference to Benjamin. For Benjamin's use of these words, see his *Gesammelte Schriften, op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 615. See also Jay "Experience without a Subject," *op. cit.*

16. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 61.

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expressed in the story have gradually been divided between the novel and the newspaper.[17] While events were embedded and handed down in stories, i.e., a social experience (*Erfahrung*), the novel (in particular the *Bildungsroman*) integrated *social* process with the *individual* development of a person and thus distorted the ethical order into something brittle and individualistic. The novel provides an inadequate account of the social order.[18] Drawing on insights from Karl Kraus, Benjamin states that the newspaper, likewise, codes its "information" so heavily with editorial explanations that the reader is given no room for hermeneutic maneuver. It forces on the bulletin a petrified "meaning," which cannot be creatively appropriated by the reader: it is, so to speak, appropriated in advance.[19] In short, the intimate bonding of public and private experience in the older genre of the story is sundered in the extreme privatization of experience in the novel and in the public but self-contained bulletin, whose pre-packaged context cannot make a meaningful claim on the reader.

What both novels and newspapers lack, but which the story has in abundance, is what counts: counsel (*Rat*). Anticipating themes developed in mid-1960s anthropology, Benjamin suggests that many instances of storytelling have a *practical* interest.[20] Agricultural advice, warnings about new technology and scientific instruction are three of the examples provided. What they have in common is *usefulness*, whether moral or technical: "in each case the storyteller is a man who has counsel for the hearer."[21] This, however, is precisely what is gradually disappearing; in an odd phrase, "the communicability of experience is decreasing." Counsel presupposes a shared "world," and to the extent that this shared basis is lost, the "continuation of the story" of a community becomes barren. "As a result we hold no counsel either for ourselves or for others."[22] A story has continuities that make it binding on its listeners, because, in turn, it binds counsel to their lived experience. "Counsel woven into the matter of lived life is wisdom." This wisdom, which he refers to as the "'epic" side of truth, is dying out.

Benjamin describes storytelling as a weaving of events inscribed on memory and states that this practice has been lost or, at the very least, is

17. On Benjamin's view of the novel see Jay, "Experience without a Subject," *op. cit.*
18. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 443.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 445.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 441.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 442. "*Rat wissen*" usually means "to know what to do." This expression thus implies an intimate relation with practical matters.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 442.

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passing away. What is being lost is the capacity for a narrative to trigger memory and its order as a response to a *rhythm* contained in the already structured realm of work. Rhythm carries the storyteller through the tale according to an internal momentum. "In this way, the web is constituted in which the gift of storytelling is nurtured. In this way, today, it is fraying at its edges after having been woven for thousands of years in the circle of the most ancient of crafts."[23] Rhythm, one might add, does not itself embody meaning. Rather, it is *how* meaning happens; it is its structure.[24] It is integral to Benjamin's understanding of what is at stake that storytelling is indeed a *craft*. Interestingly, here Benjamin consistently blurs the distinction between work and art. This suggests that meaningful experience may be brought about only if prevailing assumptions about separate domains of everyday life are challenged (e.g., work over and against leisure, or worship over and against work and leisure). For Benjamin, at least, craft-like competence extends into all areas of activity where discipline is required. His binding together of memory and rhythm into a web of experience offers an evocation of a pre-modern ecology in which events can be ordered not as discrete experiences (*Erlebnisse*) but as an integrated lived world (*Erfahrung*). Rosenzweig had said of liturgy that it "frees the gesture from the shackle of being the clumsy servant of speech and renders it *more* than speech."[25] Intimately familiar with *The Star of Redemption*, Benjamin takes up this liturgical theme and integrates it into his political project.

The crucial point here is the way Benjamin's diagnosis of what is being lost discloses the conditions any modern attempt must meet to bring about meaningful experience. In particular, the notion of binding and remembering will play a key role in his more constructive remarks about modern ritual and remembrance, although the forms they take will no longer be recognizably narrative or "religious." Here Benjamin is in step with the Romantic fragment known as the "Oldest System Program."[26] Written in 1796, this document, is one of the most important precursors of

23. *Ibid.*, p. 447.

24. Bullock notes that the contrast between "vital rhythm of living experience" and "fragmentary labors of technically oriented" "enlightened powers" owes much to Ludwig Klages. See Marcus Bullock "Reading Comes to Grief," in *The Germanic Review*, Vol. LXV, No. 4 (1990), p. 147.

25. Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung* (Frankfurt: Kaufmann, 1921) p. 373.

26. The connection between Benjamin's project and the Oldest System Program is made, once again, by Andrew Bowie in *Aesthetics and Subjectivity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 57. Bowie indicates that the philosophical task of making cognitive ideas aesthetic (and therefore publicly accessible) and yet not degenerating into irrationalism was not fulfilled by the Romantics or their 20th century successors.

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attempts, such as Benjamin's, to find a socially and imaginatively rich way of structuring meaningful experience incorporating philosophical insights about subjectivity and creativity.[27] The Program's call for a "mythology of reason" derives from its explicit rejection of superstition and priesthood (standard identifying marks of Enlightenment thinking), together with the promotion of a new, radically human theology, whose bearers "may not seek either God or immortality outside themselves." This version of Pelagianism nevertheless describes the new theology in almost functional terms: the ideas of a moral world, divinity and immortality can be grasped only by philosophers, and it is the task of a new mythology to make them intelligible to "the people." Mythology hitherto has been sensuous, but insufficiently reasonable, while philosophy hitherto has been reasonable, but insufficiently sensuous. The new "mythological philosophy" will provide sensuousness without superstition, and reason without abstraction. This will make possible "the last, greatest work of mankind: the founding of a new religion."

What is of interest here is the Oldest System Program's statement of the need, articulated in the clearest possible terms, to clothe the new philosophy of freedom in the garb of a new religion. The authors of the Program, however much they reject superstition and priestly authority, think that "religion" is a model of a form of subjectivity that integrates the philosophical, the aesthetic, the sensuous and the practical. Presented in this way, the Romantic origins of Benjamin's own interest in "embodiment" become obvious.[28] Along with the authors of the Program, Benjamin attempts to re-evaluate questions of ecclesiology and liturgy in functional aesthetic and political terms. There are, however, significant differences. At its simplest, the Program calls for new content in mythology, but it does not consider the need for new methods of communication. Benjamin insists that any constructive practice of "weaving" a whole will involve not only new content but a new practice. It will not be merely a new mythology but a new ritual, and this will entail making use of technology and other "synthetic" media.

Like the Romantics, Benjamin is clear that any new embodied weaving of experience will not happen by itself: human history, left to itself, progresses "by its bad side." If proper relations between subjects are to be

27. For the text itself, see *ibid.*, pp. 265-267.

28. The Romantic roots are central to the questions Benjamin sets out to address. The clearest exposition of Benjamin's concern with language in relation to Romantic philosophy can be found in chapter 8 of Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory*.

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established, it will entail hard work on a consciously planned project, which will rely on accurate analysis of current cultural conditions. This intervention cannot simply be a manifesto for a "new mythology." First, "mythology" will not be sufficient because, in Benjamin's opinion, narrative media are being superseded by more starkly visual modes of communication. Secondly, it requires the other two theological dimensions of embodied polity and ritual, and these latter will require, in turn, a hitherto unimagined level of effort. Benjamin implies that previous embodied polities and liturgies were sustained under an already established historical momentum. Now that a new embodiment and new rituals are required, this momentum does not exist, and establishing it will be more difficult than ever. Thus, Benjamin spends a great deal of time discussing figures such as Baudelaire and Proust, both of whom exemplify the kind of effort required. But whereas Baudelaire and Proust succeeded only on an individual level, the task will be to make this effort socially embodied. In sum, to be serious about rethinking the ways in which to think, speak and act in modernity, it is necessary not merely to be seeking a "new mythology" appropriate to the times. It will be necessary to wean oneself away from totalizing discourses which interpret the world in advance, because these will reflect uncritically the dominant ideologies of the present and will perpetuate what Benjamin refers to as "the history of the victors."[29] It will be necessary to pay renewed attention both to the particularities of the cultural present and to establish a renewed relation with the broken past through what Benjamin calls the "dialectical image."

From this, it is clear just how radically "modern" Benjamin is. His relation to theology is marked above all by a belief that previous forms of revelation, church and liturgy are simply not possible under modern conditions. Unlike most cultural critics, who often assume that church and liturgy are disposable historical baggage, Benjamin argues that this results in the loss of meaning and reduces human interactions with the world to the level of disjointed stimuli and inadequate responses. For him, to be modern *and* to have a meaningful relation to other people and the world entails replacing *all* the conditions that previously made integrated experience possible, and that will include ecclesiological and liturgical dimensions.

Rat (counsel) is the category most relevant for understanding Benjamin's approach to these problems. For him, Kafka succeeds in revealing the truth of modern bureaucracy, but he is also a "failure," because he

29. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 696.

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gives up the attempt to communicate wisdom. "Only the products of its disintegration are left"[30]: "his splendid attempt to make poetry (*Dichtung*) into teaching (*Lehre*), as a parable, failed. . . ."[31] Turning from Kafka to Baudelaire, Benjamin's discussion of modern embodiment turns explicitly to questions of liturgical practice. Moved by Bergson's reflections on time and by Proust's reading of Baudelaire, Benjamin suggests that the writer of *Les Fleurs du Mal* attempted to produce a kind of experience (*Erfahrung*) which incorporates ritualistic (*kultisch*) elements.[32] A large part of Benjamin's discussion is inspired by Freud, and is devoted to the ways in which stimuli can produce either conscious experience or unconscious effects, depending on whether one "registers" events explicitly or not.[33]

In the current context, Benjamin suggests that the only way for experience to be established in a way strong enough to withstand assaults from the sheer pressure of modern living-conditions is in the realm of the ritual.[34] Baudelaire's "correspondences" have something in common with festivals of earlier eras in that the poems are able to assemble experiences and give them some order. Yet, this turns out to be because Baudelaire holds only "broken and scattered pieces of proper historical experience."[35] Along with Kafka, Baudelaire offers hints, rather than constructive practices. The kind of experience Baudelaire manages to fashion has something "ritualistic" about it, but it is not integrated properly. Rather, it is described as "shock protection" marshalled in an attempt to parry "with his spiritual and physical person" the shocks visited on him by "the crowd."[36] Baudelaire's defensive strategy is instructive, but in the end it cannot make any positive contribution that would help bring about the conditions for an experience meaningfully related to truth; or, more exactly, to a truth that is more than simply a despondent judgment on existing relations between the world and the body. Baudelaire can only clarify the task. Roberts sums up Benjamin's position: "From such a perspective, the poetry of sentiment — even Baudelaire and Kafka — had increasingly little to say, while the critic, not as complacent *belletriste* but as a warning Joshua, had a more and more urgent task."[37]

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30. Benjamin, *Briefe* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1978), Vol. II, p. 763
31. *Ibid.*, p. 427.
32. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 638.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 612ff.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 638.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 643).
36. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 616.
37. Roberts, *Walter Benjamin*, *op. cit.*, p. 121

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In a particularly significant passage, Benjamin suggests a parallel between the relation of *Erlebnis* to *Erfahrung*, and the relation of massed individuals to a genuine group. The figure of the masses in Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* "constitutes no class, no structured collective. It has to do with nothing other than the amorphous throng of passers-by, the street crowd."[38] Benjamin's holistic tendencies once again take the form of an urgent interest in what binds different things into a meaningful web, this time at two levels. In pointing to what experience and social organization have in common, i.e., to be either shapelessly amassed singularities or coherently integrated members of a whole, Benjamin suggests a double task. It seems that producing an appropriate integrated experience requires not only activities analogous to storytelling that promote counsel, but also a communal body that might participate in that experience and make its different parts into members.

Benjamin's interest in (and well-documented reservations about) communist politics should be seen in this light. His search for embodiment is more demanding than general calls for solidarity or association. His interest in *Erfahrung* is inseparable from his concern with *Rat* and its concrete embodiment in social practices. Baudelaire may well have succeeded in turning *Erlebnis* into *Erfahrung*, but it does not constitute genuine embodiment.[39] Just as Kafka puts an end to storytelling, but does not replace it, Baudelaire's exposure of the shocks of urban life marks the transition from *polis* to *metropolis* without successfully instituting new practices that might integrate these shocks into a meaningful experience. Rather, he was only able to "win" great poems from the *ineffectiveness* of that same consolation, from the failure of that same ardour and from the miscarriage of that same work.[40] Thus, Baudelaire is a "star without atmosphere," and Benjamin's own task will be to take these negative insights to a new level and produce a positive practice.

Bodily Presence of Mind

A tendency toward a more constructive approach can be seen in two places in Benjamin's earlier work — *One Way Street* (1925-26) and in the

38. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 618.

39. This observation thus poses a challenge to Andrew Benjamin, who argues that Benjamin uses Baudelaire to establish a "final conclusion" about experience. See Andrew Benjamin *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy: Destruction and Experience* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 133. As Roberts has suggested, Benjamin's work consistently and insistently points beyond Baudelaire.

40. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 641.

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essay on Surrealism (1929). Roberts' brief discussion of the body in Benjamin's work traces the opposition, central to Benjamin's reflections, between so-called symbolic and melancholic thinking. This refers to the difference between bodies that are "integral," where "the intelligible world is continuous with the sensory," and bodies that are "dislocated" as in Dürer's engraving *Melencolia I* (discussed by Benjamin in the *Trauerspiel* book) or the work of Francis Bacon, which makes of the body "no more than twisted meat bereft even of the minimal structure of a skeleton."[41] The dangers of these extremes drive Benjamin's theory to clear a path that leads neither to the symbolic, where the "clean-limbed vigor of egalitarian utopias becomes the voyeuristic body-fetishism of the fascists," nor to the melancholic: the "dour piety of Protestantism, with its passionate grieving for the *deus abscondicus*." Roberts characterizes Benjamin's alternative as follows: "the realization that all reality is pragmatic, provisional and variable . . . world and subject are together involved in a continuous process of change whose engine . . . is *struggle*, and whose truth lies not in contemplation of eternity but in the grasping of the moment."[42] Despite the explicitly Hobbesian assumptions about a fundamentally violent reality behind this account, Benjamin's contribution is that his method is overtly *constructive*.[43] This method is neither nostalgic for an older coherence nor paralyzed by the changes modernity has engendered. Rather, it attempts to show how something meaningful can be made out of the fragments generated by modernity. He treats this question both in general and specifically.

In these two works, Benjamin talks about "bodily collectivity" and "bodily presence of mind." These two physical images constitute a subjectivity elaborated in his later work in the 1930s, yet never satisfactorily worked out. There is a claim here which must be addressed. It is warranted by the following passage: "Not with impunity is the body cheated of its

41. Julian Roberts, "The Aesthetics of Conflict," in *The Actuality of Walter Benjamin*, a special edition of *New Foundations* 20 (Summer 1993), p. 164

42. *Ibid.*, p. 165. Roberts' account parallels Eagleton's in suggesting that Benjamin offers a third way between "regression" and "disconsolation." For Eagleton, the task is to "re-channel the desire from both past and present to the future." See Terry Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism* (London: Verso, 1981), p. 42.

43. Roberts notes that this dimension of Benjamin's aesthetics has much in common with Soviet *Constructivism*. See Roberts, "The Aesthetics of Conflict," *op. cit.*, p. 166. At the heart of Roberts' analysis is the suggestion that of all the responses to modernism, that of writers has been most disappointing, characterized by a weak-willed intellectual flabbiness. Benjamin's call for an intellectual engagement seeks to transcend the "*flâneur*, hero, putschist, conspirator and so on." *Ibid.*, p. 163.

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power to compete with and triumph over the fates on its own ground. The moment is the Gaudine Yoke beneath which fate must bow to the body. To transform the threat of the future into a fulfilled now, the only telepathic miracle worth wishing for, is a work of bodily presence of mind. Prehistoric times, when such conduct belonged to man's daily economy, gave him, in the naked body, the most reliable instrument of divination. Even antiquity knew the true practice, and Scipio, stumbling as he stepped onto Carthaginian soil, called out (spreading his arms wide as he fell) the slogan of victory: *Teneo te, terra Africana*! What would have become an augury of terror he binds bodily to the split second, and so makes himself the factotum of his body. In such things, the ancient ascetic exercises of fasting, chastity, and vigil have all along celebrated their greatest victories. The day lies each morning like a fresh shirt upon our bed. . . . The happiness of the next twenty-four hours hangs on our ability in waking to pick it up."[44]

This poetic passage shows the extent to which Benjamin's thought is saturated with theological thinking. Central to this passage is the insistence that human action is best understood not as something "autonomous," but as a response to a prior initiative that is not a conscious human self-creation. In some sense, the body can register claims coming from "outside." Such claims are not the product of human willing: Benjamin distances himself from Enlightenment autonomy that squanders tradition and breaks up ethical life. At the same time, he rejects any uncritical acceptance of tradition. Because it is controlled by the winners, it must be brushed against the grain.[45] Most relevant for concrete political action, however, is the fact that Benjamin's model for a proper practice is not heroic. There is no once-and-for-all accomplishment that can settle the account. Rather, the "threat of the future" presents itself as a daily task whose claim can be answered only one at a time. Here, too, Benjamin's liturgical interests are part of his argument. Given the climate of revolutionary enthusiasm at the time this "Marxist" work was written, it is important to grasp the implications of Benjamin's reference to ascesis (which are paralleled by his later concern with the calendar). It may be that, for him, acts of intervention will be "little and often," rather than mighty and sudden. As he puts it in the programmatic beginning of *One Way Street*: "you do not stand in front of a turbine and baste it with machine oil; you inject a little on to hidden rivets and joints that you have to know about."[46] There is a crucial difference

44. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 142.
45. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 697.
46. *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 85.

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between donning a suit of armor and putting on a shirt.[47]

These themes come together in a similar way in Benjamin's essay on Surrealism, where he makes clear that the body is constantly and liturgically "revolutionary": "The collective is at the same time a body. And the *physis* which organizes itself in technology is (according to its whole political and material reality) to be produced only in that *Bildraum* in which profane illumination makes us native. Only when body and *Bildraum* so deeply penetrate technology that all revolutionary tension becomes bodily collective innervation, all bodily innervation becomes collective revolutionary discharge, that reality has surpassed itself in the way *The Communist Manifesto* demands."[48]

In this idiosyncratic formulation, Benjamin ties together a number of themes recurring throughout his writing. The body is the locus of a new aesthetic and political creativity. Here, too, the body is primarily an organ of response to a "reality" that precedes and possesses it.[49] His approach also has a constructive interest that rejects any aesthetic apprehension of the absolute or the future that produces *only* works of art or forms of religious contemplation substituting for political engagement. Apprehension of the absolute issues in action, not merely in inspiration. Modern consciousness, dulled by a radical separation of subject and object, needs to be illuminated by a bodily alertness to the future: a constant responsiveness, every day.

Benjamin insists that the tensed muscles of revolutionary desire need to become a bodily energizing that responds by being constantly alert to the future. He has two unusual images for this — the human face, which must be exchanged for the alarm-clock face that each minute rings for sixty seconds;[50] and the bodily presence of mind that brings the threat of the future to completion in the present.[51] These corporeal images point to the participatory nature of human subjectivity, which must exhibit a vibrating alertness to the exigencies of an incomplete reality. Benjamin's socially embodied subject is disciplined, constantly on edge, ready to use "the foreshadowings, presentiments and signals that pass day and night through our

47. This is the political expression of his insistence that eternal truth is better apprehended in the ruffle of a dress than in momentous ideas. *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 578.

48. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 310.

49. Eagleton makes a similar point about Benjamin's attempt to engage in bodily "construction." See Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin*, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-155, although the nature of this construction is left tantalizingly unexplored.

50. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 310.

51. *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 142.

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organism like wave impulses."[52] With these impulses, a bald choice is offered the bombarded subject: "to interpret them or to use them."

The Synthetic Body

The constructive aspect of Benjamin's work, however, is disappointing. It would be satisfying to be able to show how, in his late work, Benjamin went on to provide an account of synthetic embodiments that combine disciplined practices of narration and ritual to produce redeemed forms of *Erfahrung* under modern conditions. His suicide in 1940, at the age of forty-eight, meant there would be no "late work." As a consequence, one can only assemble the hints Benjamin left in his last writings.

One of the central questions posed by Benjamin is: what efforts bring about the technological reconfigurations that modern society so badly needs? Left to itself, modernity is marked by a move from *Erfahrung* to *Erlebnis*. This is an irreversible sequence of events. The free repetition of storytelling (Leskov) and ritual (Baudelaire) has been superseded by the advent of "shock experience." Benjamin is unquestionably pessimistic about the possibility of a return to the unified "natural" community, even if such an ideal type ever existed. In its place, a number of supersessions come into play. Storytelling becomes socialist writing, ritual becomes politicized.[53] The task at hand becomes the transmission of counsel through a meaningful experience expressed in *socialist* art forms. In the synthetic body, counsel is exemplified above all in the dialectical image. This is clearly an extraordinarily instrumental view, which helps understand why Adorno reacted so strongly to Benjamin's simplistic advocacy of technology and socialist art.[54]

Benjamin's treatment of Proust in two essays of 1929 and 1939 respectively raises important issues.[55] Unlike Baudelaire and Kafka, Proust makes a number of significant advances, of which two are of particular interest. The first is the explicit references to *formal practices* as

52. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

53. The two most obvious ones are "The Author as Producer" (*ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 683-701) and "The Work of Art in the Age of its Mechanical Reproduction" (there are two versions of this: Vol. I, pp. 431-469 and Vol. I, pp. 471-508).

54. For Adorno's long letter to Benjamin indicating the problems with this position, see *Briefe*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 671-682.

55. For Benjamin's work on Proust and its relation to his earlier work, see Ulrich Schwarz, *Rettende Kritik und antizipierte Utopie: Zum geschichtlichen Gehalt ästhetischer Erfahrung in den Theorien von Jan Mukarovsky, Walter Benjamin und Theodor W. Adorno* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1981), pp. 121-131; John McCole, *Walter Benjamin and the Antinomies of Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 253-279.

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the basis of meaningful experience: "Where experience, in the strict sense, prevails, certain contents of the individual, in conjunction with those of the collective past, appear in memory. The rituals with their ceremonials, their celebrations, which may nowhere have been explicitly recalled in Proust, continually brought about the renewed merging of these two elements of memory."[56]

Here, for Benjamin, the bringing together of singular and collective, *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, is a matter not only of strenuous effort, but more particularly of ceremonial and formal celebration. What is required is not only the exertions of the individual body, but also the rhythmical constitution of a social body. The spatial ordering of *unconscious* memories in social organization has a parallel temporal arrangement in some form of calendar.[57] This has parallels with the ritual dimension of Baudelaire's poetry, and he says explicitly: "It has an affinity (*Verwandtschaft*) with Baudelaire's work, in that it gathers the days of remembrance into a spiritual year."[58] This ritual interest is suggestive of the political embodiment Benjamin envisages. The second aspect of his increasingly theological description of Proust's method is even more striking: "Proust did not become tired of the training which his movements in feudal circles demanded. Through perseverance, and without very much coercion to do it, he forged his nature so as to make it as impenetrable and resourceful, humble and difficult, as it needed to be for the sake of his task. Later the mystification, the elaborateness would be part of his nature to such an extent that his letters are sometimes whole systems of parentheses . . ."[59] The distinctly monastic overtones of this description are developed later on: "Hardly since the spiritual exercises of [Ignatius of] Loyola has there been in Western literature a more radical attempt at self-immersion."[60]

This language has fundamental implications for the practice Benjamin has in mind when he asserts the need for "illumination" to become more than mere contemplation of images.[61] What Proust's imagination offers is a way of understanding the enormous individual effort required

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56. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 611. Schwarz explicitly notes that this kind of plundering of historical practices is intended to undercut the "modern" homogenization of space and time. See Schwarz *Rettende Kritik op. cit.*, p. 161.

57. That for Benjamin this is bound up with notions of *redemption* is clearly brought out by Schwarz, *ibid.*, p. 127.

58. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 641.

59. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 316.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 321.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 304.

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in overcoming the prevailing accommodation between "symbolic" and "melancholic" views of the body and its work. Benjamin sums up this kind of embodiment as follows: "Proust's work *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* may be viewed as an experiment to produce experience . . . in a synthetic way under today's societal conditions. For one can count less and less on their being achieved in a natural way."[62] The task, therefore, is to advance beyond Proust by making this effort *social*, to bring about some constructive generation and dissemination of new practices. Proust himself leaves too much to chance: "It is, according to Proust, a matter of chance as to whether the individual acquires an image of self or is able to appropriate his own experience (*Erfahrung*). It is by no means to be taken for granted that one should depend upon chance in this matter."[63]

For Benjamin, chance is not an appropriate model for responsible political subjectivity. Rather, the task is to bring about this experience in an embodied and liturgically ordered way. Proust himself provides a model for this effort at the individual level. Yet, even here there is evidence of something more than individual at work. Proust's book is not merely the product of a solitary author. It may be underwritten by the effort of a more substantial body. Benjamin evokes this by comparing Proust's well-known opposition between two kinds of remembering: *volontaire* and *involontaire*. The first denotes the individual conscious effort required to bring past experiences to mind, and Proust himself notes that its product is a pale copy of what is recalled. The second, exemplified by the smell of the *petite madeleine*, is more powerful and is able to bring the past back to consciousness with considerable force. Here, what Proust has separated Benjamin intends to bind together. His reason for doing so is straightforward: the *volontaire* is answerable to reason, whereas the *involontaire* arises only through a seemingly random agency, yet it is by far the more powerful. Benjamin does not believe that this does justice to the actual possibilities of remembering. His strategy for ordering the *involontaire* consists partly in associating the "chance" element with individual experience, and then showing that collective experience always appears alongside individual memories because "experience is a matter of tradition, in collective as well as in private life. It arises less from particularities rigidly fixed in recollection than from accumulated and frequently unconscious data which flow together in memory."[64] The key to overcoming the

62. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 609.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 610.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 608.

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separation between the *volontaire* and *involontaire* lies in a redescription of the subject as a social participant, rather than as an isolated individual. This strategy attempts to redeem the promise of "new mythology," as it were, by binding the sensuous and the rational.

One of the recurring features of Benjamin's mature work is the binding of synthetic embodiment — the corporeal discipline required to forge a renewed *Erfahrung* — with the organization of time. His disparagement of the "homogeneous and empty time" of a historicism whose additive method produces a "mass of facts" to fill it[65] is counterposed to a different way of ordering time. This is achieved primarily in his observations on Proust and Baudelaire and the notion of the "festival."[66] What Proust suppresses in his separation of the *volontaire* and the *involontaire* is the collective content of his memory. Proust's failure to recall the formative celebratory acts of worship leaves him with an impoverished notion of remembering, because it is precisely these acts that bring the individual and the collective together to make experience meaningful. It is through attention to *collective* remembering that "voluntary and involuntary memory lose their reciprocal exclusivity."[67]

The real difficulty is that if rituals and festivals provide the necessary conditions for remembering, then something analogous to ritual is needed even when the integrity of a religious tradition starts to break up, i.e., when the body is lost. To pose this in Proustian terms, Benjamin suggests that the *involontaire* of remembrance can be promoted by a *volontaire* renewal of particular rituals and the discipline with which they are associated. Here Benjamin is not calling for a "restoration" of a former state,[68] but for a carefully thought-out approach to public practice that is not founded on a suspect notion of the individual. The main danger of ideologies of individualism, whose paradigmatic subject is "the consumer," is that they reduce *all* political action to the *volontaire*, and leave the darker, more powerful agency of unconscious memory unexamined and thus freely available to those who expertly manipulate these aspects of human experience, now regarded as "irrational."[69] By disciplining the *involontaire*, Benjamin hopes to set up a structural counter-position that resists

65. *Ibid.*, p. 702,

66. Benjamin may have acquired a sensitivity to this issue through his reading of Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption*. For a representative passage dealing with festivals, time and liturgy, see Rosenzweig, *op. cit.*, pp. 364-374.

67. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 611.

68. On this, see Bullock, "Three Headstones," *op. cit.*, p. 225.

69. Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

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the unbridled spectacles seen in National Socialism. Such discipline can only be established in some formal ritual practice.

Above all, in *On the Concept of History* Benjamin presents a number of possibilities for a renewed organization of time, although these are not elaborated in any detail. The first is the idea of *Jetztzeit* (now-time), which characterizes a true encounter with the past whereby it becomes present. Images from the past can be "loaded with *Jetztzeit*," which can be "blasted out from the continuum of history"[70] and thus challenge contemporary self-understanding and practice. The second challenge to this "continuum" of empty, fact-filled time comes in a familiar way: from the cycle of festivals: "The great revolution brought in a new calendar. The day with which a calendar begins functions as a kind of historical time-lapse photography. It is basically the same day that always recurs in the shape of festivals, and these are days of remembrance. The calendars do not count out time like clocks. They are monuments of a historical consciousness of which not the slightest trace seems to have been visible in Europe for a hundred years."[71]

In all his reflections on "messianic time" and other apocalyptic images marshalled to signal the urgency of a transformed sense of history, Benjamin's examples are always those of "embodied time." Each act of restitution and remembrance emerges from the synthetic production of a body. This can be seen most clearly in those parts of the *Arcades Project* that touch on pedagogy. Susan Buck-Morss has drawn the full implications of this work. The basic argument is this: Benjamin shows events in the 19th century that have parallels with those in the 20th (in particular the world exhibitions) so as to point out that, just as the last century's events did not lead to labor solidarity, neither would more contemporary examples. Against this background, Buck-Morss seeks to show that Benjamin's task was the construction of a historiography that would awaken the reader to a more engaged kind of self-understanding. This is supported by the following passage from the "theory of knowledge" section of the *Arcades Project*: "The contemporary who, in reading a work of history, recognizes with what a long hand the misery that befalls him has been in preparation — and showing the reader this must lie close to the historian's heart — thereby acquires a high opinion of his own powers. A history that teaches people in this manner does not make them melancholy, but provides them with weapons."[72]

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70. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 701.
71. *Ibid.*, pp. 701-702.
72. *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 603. Quoted in Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), p. 287.

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Despite Buck-Morss' detailed analysis, a problem remains. All forays into historiography and all attempts at some public articulation, whether as a "new mythology" or a "dialectical image," are useless unless somehow embodied. Benjamin was aware of this (hence his attentiveness to festivals and calendars). Yet, this does not mean that he provides a workable public pedagogy. Rather, he articulates the *conditions* for a pedagogy and sets about looking for where such conditions might obtain. He never found them. His indecision as to whether to join the Communist Party is a typical example of his reluctance to commit himself to any existing concrete body. He never found an appropriate corporate entity and, as a consequence, his thinking remains ungrounded, thereby contradicting the socialist and collective aspirations of his theory. He found no coherent *existing* locus for participatory embodied subjectivity.[73] No existing institution could bear that burden. As a result, there is little to be gained from trying to glean a workable pedagogy from his unfinished project.

Conclusion

There is a temptation to say of Benjamin what he said of Kafka: his writings exhibit "the beauty of a failure."[74] Yet, Benjamin's "failure" is unlike Kafka's in that it arises not from remaining at the level of melancholy diagnosis so much as from an unwillingness to relate the ubiquitous theme of the "last judgment" (and other assorted apocalyptic images) to the daily routines of rationally organized social bodies. This is a familiar predicament: the need to promote politically active experience, while remaining aware of its inseparability from the formal institutions and rituals that constitute its ground. Benjamin suggests that to refuse to separate sacred and profane is a continuing task. Yet, what may be needed is not a fundamentally *new* kind of technological social construction (which is what Benjamin himself sought) so much as a renewal of a society threatened by modern consumerist ideologies.[75] Benjamin challenges not only

73. Combined with Bowie's detailed criticism demonstrating that Benjamin (in his earlier work) fails to articulate the proper place of the individual's creativity in criticism, it is apparent that Benjamin falls short on two counts: his work provides no coherent model of subjectivity in either the individual or the social spheres. See Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory*, *op. cit.*, pp. 193-237, especially pp. 221ff.

74. A temptation to which Hannah Arendt, among others, succumbs. See Benjamin, *Illuminations*, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

75. Something along these lines is now being developed in theology. See Gerard Loughlin, *Telling God's Story* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); John Milbank, *The Word Made Strange* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997); and Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing. On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

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social theory, but also theology, because he knows what is at stake in renewing it. His thinking does not display an idle ignorance of theology or an easy atheism that assumes theology to have been superseded by "secular" philosophy. Interestingly, he continues to work with theological categories and attempts to reconfigure them for a world where community has become urban: where *polis* has become *metropolis*. In a series of affirmations, the absolute mystery loses its aura and becomes part of a political practice: cultic ritual becomes an engaged immersion in everyday experiences of time. This attempt to "overcome" theology is a judgment not on theology *tout court* so much as a damning criticism of the kinds of theology Benjamin understood to be popular in the first quarter of the 20th century. This challenge remains. It is one of the greatest disappointments about Benjamin's studies that he never engaged the work of theologians such as Karl Barth or Dietrich Bonhoeffer, both of whom might have contributed important insights to his thinking.

If Benjamin is to be of any assistance today, his failure to relate his concern with embodiment to existing bodies must be criticized. His work presents a serious task for which he does not supply adequate resources. Nevertheless, one can learn from Benjamin that the key to meaningful experience may lie in renewed forms of social embodiment. His analysis of the body challenges modern myth of the individual in an unusual way. To pose Benjamin's challenge as a critique of his own work: theory is impotent unless embodied in discipline and formal organizations of space and time. This task requires a serious engagement with rituals and liturgy. To the extent he is correct, Benjamin challenges his successors to acknowledge that theology belongs at the very heart of social theory. As Rosenzweig put it: "The philosopher must be more than philosophy . . . he must be human: flesh and blood. But it is not enough if that is *all* he is. He must, as flesh and blood — for such he is — pray the prayer of creatures." Benjamin, with modern politics in mind, would add: "And the theologian must be more than theology."[76]

76. Rosenzweig, *op. cit.*, p. 373.

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Notes and Reviews:

*What Remains of 1968? Comments of an Ordinary Witness**

Claude Karnoouh

> "Leave the red scare to the horned beasts."
> — A graffiti on the walls of the Ecole des Beaux Arts de Paris, May 1968.

After thirty years, anyone attempting to objectively evaluate the events of May 1968 — the strikes, the occupations of universities and factories, the huge demonstrations and the riots — would find few living traces of these events. They have been transformed into historical accounts, a bunch of books, the TV commemorations of which France is so fond. In brief, they are all but dead history. Even the hedonistic aspects have not survived: show-business has turned them into commodities.

Today, in their fifties, some the former leaders of the student movement have become politicians, some ordinary journalists, some high-level bureaucrats, some wise businessmen — all of them well integrated in the "bourgeois" socio-political system they used to denounce so violently. For most of these "young" people, May 1968 is nothing more than a moment of exuberance, of sentimental education, a last fling before conforming to the predominant social order. Of course, some remain loyal to their old faith; the survivors of an obsolete Left, the witnesses of late modernity's prehistory.

In retrospect, May 1968 appears as a revolutionary caricature. This is a reminder, once again, that history never repeats itself and, if it claims to do so,

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* Translated from the French by Francesca Ficai.

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what results is but a grotesque parody. Despite a vocabulary derived from the whole arsenal of Leftism, Leninism, Luxemburgism, Trotskism, Ultra-leftism, Gramscism, Guevaraism, Maoism and other "isms," in May 1968 French socio-economic realities had nothing in common with 1917 Russia, 1932 Germany, 1936 Spain, or the China of the Long March or of the Cultural Revolution. In May 1968, Gaullist France experienced a historically unprecedented economic expansion. It became a powerful, industrialized country with virtually no unemployment. Despite some blunders, following the end of the Algerian war, thanks to General De Gaulle, the country developed a credible geopolitical presence in competition with the US.

In May 1968, France was a wealthy country with a threefold increase in the number of students during the last ten years. Such an inflation generated social dysfunctions: on the one hand, France was a wealthy society in socio-professional transition, but with an aging "bourgeois" work force still subscribing to a 19th century political paradigm; on the other, it had academic and cultural institutions unable to meet the needs of a growing number of young students influenced by a "francified" hippie movement (that is to say, redefined in political terms borrowed from the history of the European far Left). 1968 France did not provide enough social space for the massive growth of the cultured middle classes constituting the social base of late modernity. Thus, the overwhelming majority of students who rose against the social order were part of those new cultural middle classes educated in psychology, ethnology, social history, political science: the humanities. In the spirit of full-employment, after their studies they expected a job to give them access to the perks of consumer society, which had become the way-to-be fully human.[2]

That is why, in retrospect, the foresight of De Gaulle's political advisers should by appreciated: they were able to see what, beneath all of the students' slogans and anachronistic political chatter, were their real demands: to become fully integrated into the society benefiting from the new economic growth. A moderate repression was followed by a bold reform of the university and the multiplication of cultural institutions, which during the next ten years, up to the early 1980s, provided the increasingly important masses of student the jobs necessary to fulfill their longing for social mobility.

If, for a while, some could believe in a synergy of students' and workers' demands, very quickly union leaders and, most of all, the Secretary General of the Communist Union, the C.G.T., frustrated their hopes of mobilizing militants: it was not a time for revolution, and Jean-Paul Sartre had to find out the hard way. Unlike the students, they did not play with words learned in books or in

2. See, in this regard, the reflections of Henri Lebfévre in his *Critique de la Vie Quotidienne* (Paris, 1962), and the two remarkable novels emblematic of the moment: Christine Rocheford, *Les Petits Enfants du Siècle* (Paris, 1965); and Georges Pérec, *Les Choses* (Paris, 1967).

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class. Union leaders knew perfectly well that it was not a matter of a political revolution or a social revolt, but a way to gain better wages and working conditions from a management enriched by exceptional economic growth. In perfect connivance, the Georges Pompidou government and the unions signed the famous Grenelle Agreement, updating the Matignon Agreements signed in 1936 by Léon Blum, the head of the government of the Popular Front.

The social movement had burned itself out: the workers had gained some social and financial concessions; the students, some new professional prospects guaranteeing their status as the future élites. The social order once again could follow its normal course. Some marginal student groups did involve some young workers caught in the trap of revolutionary rhetoric in brief, often manipulated terroristic activities, but it was over. In July 1968, a graffiti on the Sorbonne walls told the truth of the movement: "Under the paving-stone, the beach." In fact, it was high time to go on vacation.

However, during this vacation — more to the East, more to the West — other students had more painful experiences: In Prague, where the Soviets came to articulate the theory of limited sovereignty; on Liberty Square in Mexico, where the army shot angry students, leaving dozens dead. In France, under the illusion that history could repeat itself, it became a revolutionary game. In fact, it was a matter of growing pains, of a spectacular way whereby new social groups became integrated into the new world of late modernity. The revolutionary speeches only vented a hedonistic nostalgia, proof that this history had already run its course.

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The Origins of Autonomy

Marcel Gauchet, *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion*, tr. by Oscar Burge with a foreword by Charles Taylor (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997). 228pp.+xv.

Marcel Gauchet's book is an ambitious study of the rise and demise of religion.[1] Written in the tradition of the "grand narratives," he seeks to reconstruct the multiple linkages between the transformation of religion and the secularization of Western civilization.[2] Relying on Max Weber and Cornelius Castoriadis, Gauchet seeks to explain the transition from a religious universe to a preeminently profane world that has broken irrecoverably with its religious past. How, Gauchet asks, did the transition take place? How did the modern world and especially politics succeed in emancipating themselves from God? How was the break with the invisible Other possible? In answering these questions, Gauchet deploys Weber's theory of rationalization.[3] Like Weber, who located the birth of modern capitalism within the Reformation,[4] Gauchet situates the development of a self-sufficient secular sphere within the broader Judeo-Christian tradition.

Starting from Judaic monotheism and following its historical transformations first into primitive Christianity, institutionalized Catholicism and Protestantism, Gauchet describes how this tradition finally led to its own destruction. According to Gauchet, the "death of religion," is the final outcome of the inner logic of religious development and the unavoidable consequence of structural contradictions inscribed at the very core of the religious experience. Instead of looking for external causes challenging the hegemony of religion, he attempts to "grasp how reason progresses *through* god" and how humanity was "liberated from *within* the depths of the religious bond" (pp. 62 and 156 — italics added). Here he comes closer to Nietzsche: the critical mechanism of transition from religious dispossession to democratic self-institution is identified with the invention of the state. The genesis of the rational bureaucratic machine of coercion, rather than being just another cog in the broader chain of rationalization, represents a uniquely decisive moment in the historical evolution of Western civilization, "a main event in human history"

1. See also Marcel Gauchet, "Politique et Societé: la Lesson des Sauvages," in *Textures*, Vol.10-11 (1975), pp. 12-13 (1975); "La Dette du Sens et les Racines de l'Etat: Politique de la Religion Primitive," in *Libre*, Vol. 2 (1977); "Les Deux Corps du Rois au Pouvoir sans Corps: Christianisme et Politique," in *Le Debat*, Vol. 14 (1981), p. 15.

2. For a discussion of the concept of secularization see José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp.12-39.

3. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, tr. by Talcott Parsons and introduced by Anthony Giddens (London: Routledge, 1992).

4. Max Weber, "The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism," in H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1991).

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(p. 9).[5] The state is that strategic site in which a metaphysical order is inverted and re-articulated into a secular one. In Gauchet's terms, it is the institutional point for the transmutation of the logic of transcendence into one of immanence.

One of the most controversial aspects of Weber's argument was that the genesis of capitalism is followed by a paradox: the more the Protestant reformation rationalized the world, the more the world became irrational and incomprehensible, thus disenchanted.[6] Gauchet appropriates this "fundamental paradox of religion" (p. 30), but only in order to replace its content with a different narrative: the more God became omnipotent, the more he withdrew from the temporal world, abandoning humans to their own fate. Thus, Gauchet's central thesis: "the greater the gods, the freer the humans are" (p. 54). A political institution with a long past, the state entered history with a renewed role, exactly at the right moment to fill God's vacant place. If it was initially conceived as an institutional arrangement representing God, it subsequently confiscated His power to relocate it at the center of society. This event marked the transition from a transcendental concept of legitimacy to an immanent-democratic one; from an heteronomous to an autonomous society (pp. 172-74).

Gauschet's book is a remarkable contribution to the literature on secularization.[7] But it is not just an academic history of religion, and its allusions to democratic theory also need to be examined. Instead of presenting a political history of religion, Gauchet proposes a religious history of autonomy, in both its political and individual aspects. According to his account, democracy emerged from within the Judeo-Christian tradition and through its successive modifications. Thus, instead of approaching the arrival of democracy as "a confrontation between religion and its other," Gauchet asserts that it was "essentially constituted from within the religious field, whether it was nurtured by religion's substance or deployed as an expression of one of its fundamental potentialities" (p. 59). Political autonomy — "the legitimate organization of the collective body. . .

5. The state plays a central role in Nietzsche's account of modernity and nihilism. By appropriating the symbolic function of the divine Other, the state becomes one of the most important engines for the secular transformation of Christianity into mass democracy. Instead of glorifying it, as it is commonly assumed, he dismissed the state as a new form of domination, homogenization and decadence. Nietzsche characterizes the state as "the coldest of all cold monsters. Coldly it lies, too; and this lie creeps from its mouth: 'I, the state, am the people.' It is a lie! . . Just see how it lures them, the many-too-many! How it devours them, and chews them, and re-chews them! 'There is nothing greater on earth than I, the regulating finger of God' — thus the monster bellows." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, tr. by R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguins Books, 1969), pp. 75 and 76.

6. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-54 and 180-82; "Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions," in *From Max Weber*, *op. cit.*, pp. 351, 353 and 356-57; "Science as a Vocation," in *ibid.*, pp. 139-40 and 155.

7. Gauchet's thesis has generated a heated debate. See Pierre Colin and Olivier Mongin, eds., *Un Monde Desenschante? Debat avec Marcel Gauchet sur "Le Desenschantement du Monde"* (Paris: Theses/Cerf, 1988). See also Marc-Olivier Padis, *Marcel Gauchet: La Genèse de la Democratie* (Paris: Editions Michalon, 1996).

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[as the] explicit cooperation and instituting operation of its members" (p. 58) — appears paradoxically as the inverted form of religious heteronomy.[8]

Whereas in a religious society the divine Other was its instituting source, in a secular society the state as the institutional expression of a democratically self-organized community is the sole entity responsible for positing future collective goals and for regulating social life. Here, Gauchet appropriates Castoriadis' well-known definitions of autonomy as the self-institution of society and heteronomy as the concealment of this instituting act through the positing of an extra-social force, in this case God.[9] In doing so, however, Gauchet turns these concepts against Castoriadis' thesis that democracy was created only twice: first, outside and against Western religion, in ancient Greece and, second, in early modern urban Europe, where it actively contributed to its own demise.[10]

To appreciate Gauchet's attempted refutation of Castoriadis one must consider French intellectual debates in the 1980s, following the crisis of Marxism and the rise of liberalism. At the center of these debates was the relation between "ancients" and "moderns." Taking up once again an 18th century discussion, symbolized by Benjamin Constant's 1819 speech,[11] intellectuals such as Luc Ferry, Jean-Marc Ferry and Alain Renaut dusted off this old quarrel.[12] This was

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8. Gauchet simply reproduces Castoriadis' redefinition of religion (p. 22). See Cornelius Castoriadis, "Institution of Society and Religion," in David Ames Curtis, ed., *World in Fragments: Writings on Politics, Society, Psychoanalysis, and the Imagination* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 318-9.

9. Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, tr. by Kathleen Blamey (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1987).

10. Cornelius Castoriadis, "The Greek Polis and the Creation of Democracy," in David Ames Curtis, ed., *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

11. Benjamin Constant, "The Liberty of the Ancients Compared to that of the Moderns," in Biancamaria Fontana, ed., *Constant: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Constant elaborated three versions of the relation between ancients and moderns. As a young republican, he praised the ancients for their democratic practices; as he became an exponent of "pure liberalism," he attacked ancient Greece; finally, in his last years, he sought to reconcile the ancients and the moderns. His essay is less a call for modern liberty than an attempt to find a middle solution. What is interesting is that Constant shifted political positions as his image of the ancients changed. The more liberal he became, the more critical of democracy he was. This testifies not only to the intrinsic uneasy relation between democracy and liberalism, but also reveals the political motivation behind recent liberal attempts to discredit the ancient Greek democratic experience. See Henri Grange, ed., Benjamin Constant, *Fragments d'un Ouvrage Abandonne sur la Possibilité d'une Constitution Republicaine dans un Grand Pays (1800-1803)* (Paris: Aubier, 1991); Etienne Hofmann, ed., *Principles de Politique Applicables a tous les Gouvernements, (1802-1806)* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1980); and "Principles of Politics Applicable to All Representative Governments" (1815), in *Constant: Political Writings*, *op. cit.*

12. See Mark Lilla, "The Legitimacy of the Liberal Age," in Mark Lilla, ed., *New French Thought: Political Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

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not merely a trivial academic disagreement involving only a few historians of ideas. On the contrary, it was a politically-loaded debate concerning the nature, content and scope of democracy and its vexing relation with liberalism.

By appropriating the invention of democracy from the ancient Greek polis and early European, especially Italian cities and attributing it instead to the Western religious tradition and its last historical manifestation, the Protestant Reformation, Luc Ferry, Jean-Marc Ferry, and Gauchet seek to undermine the radical dimension of democratic politics.[13] In ancient Greek and early modern Italian cities, democratic practices, either direct or mixed in their partiality and limitations, were a collective mode of being that required the commitment of the entire "free" population, the elimination of substantive inequalities, the open questioning of inherited norms, and the collective creation of new ones, whereas modern representative democracy demands abstinence and privatization, embraces socio-economic inequalities, and presupposes political elitism. Where the classical model of democracy sought to generate greater amounts of political power through public participation, its modern, representative counterpart seeks to contain political power through complex institutional devices.[14] In order to avoid the political implications of this comparison, ancient democracy has to be misrepresented, distorted and vilified. For example, Luc Ferry has argued that ancient democracy was inegalitarian, hierarchical, anti-individualistic, holistic and exclusionary. He concludes that "the political motivation for a return to classical thinking is deeply antidemocratic."[15] In the same vein, Jean-Marc Ferry credits Christianity with the discovery of individual autonomy and sees in ancient Greek thought a lack of creativity and innovation.[16]

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13. This is a novel argument. For an older generation of liberal thinkers, political and individual autonomy emerged out of a radical break with religion and its institutional embodiment: the Church. Strongly influenced by the Enlightenment, they saw modernity as deeply hostile to the social, political and cultural establishment of the *ancien régime*. Liberalism, with its uncompromising positions concerning religious toleration, the separation of Church and State, privatization of the former, individual rights, public education and the idea of secular authority, appeared to be the political incarnation of modernity. As the anti-religious force *par excellence*, liberalism held high the banner of progress, secularization and modernization. This approach is best exemplified today in the work of Pierre Manent, who still holds to this "traditional" reading. Recently, he has proposed a history of liberalism that builds on this line of investigation, placing himself in direct opposition to Gauchet's theory. See Pierre Manent, *Naissances de la Politique Moderne: Machiavel, Hobbes, Rousseau* (Paris: Payot, 1977); *La Cité de l'Homme* (Paris, 1994); *An Intellectual History of Liberalism*, tr. by Rebecca Balinski (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

14. See Cornelius Castoriadis, "The Greek and the Modern Political Imaginary," in *World in Fragments*, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-107.

15. Luc Ferry, *Political Philosophy*, Vol 1: *Rights — The New Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns*, tr. by Franklin Philip (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 20.

16. Jean-Marc Ferry, "L'Ancient, le Moderne et le Contemporain," in *Esprit*, December 1987.

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Gauchet shares these critiques of ancient Greek politics. He goes a step further, however, by providing them with a sophisticated historical grounding. His constant references to inversions, reversals and transpositions, indeed, his entire theoretical system for examining secularization are introduced in order to support his overarching political goal of confining democracy to "the age of political representation," thus impoverishing, neutralizing and ultimately eviscerating it (p. 174). Hence, in his chapter strategically entitled "The Greeks: The Religion of Reason," he remains brazenly silent and a-political regarding the practices, institutions and values of the Greek democratic polis (pp. 144-151).[17] The alleged benefits of this tactical move do not end here. If democracy is an exclusively modern phenomenon, created from within the Christian world-view, then it is not only identical with representation, it is also compatible with the liberal lineage of political thought. The disassociation of the democratic and even republican experience from its non-religious niches in Ancient Greece, Rome, and Italian Renaissance cities helps strengthen the links between democracy and liberalism. Whereas Castoriadis juxtaposes democracy to liberalism as two opposed political positions that only in the present century joined to create the hybrid of "liberal democracy," which he re-labeled "liberal oligarchy," Gauchet seeks to establish an elective affinity based on the genealogical proclivity between these two political values.[18]

Gauchet's real interest centers less on the internal driving logic that led to the collapse of religious symbolic structures and more on the common origins of democracy and liberalism. As he indirectly puts it, the equivalence between "the subject's power over itself" and the "doctrines of political sovereignty" is not accidental. It is rather logical and substantive, based on a common religious origin: the separation of God, which transformed the notion of man and altered the representation of power. The separation gave rise to the cognitive subject and its world-as-object. It created the moral subject by giving the inner being total self-responsibility. It also provoked a new vision of sovereign power and function by entrusting the Prince with the unique responsibility for collective being. The sovereign tended to replace the plurality of communities with the reflexive unity of a collective being

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17. *Ibid.*, pp. 144-151. For a totally opposed appreciation of ancient Greek democracy, one can consult the classical study by Pierre Leveque and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Cleisthenes the Athenian: An Essay on the Representation of Space and Time in Greek Political Thought from the End of the Sixth Century to the Death of Plato*, tr. by David Ames Curtis (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1996). See also Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Politics Ancient and Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1995); and Christian Meier, *The Greek Discovery of Politics*, tr. by David Mclintock (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

18. For the classical discussion of the incongruity between democracy and liberalism as two opposed political traditions, see Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, tr. by Ellen Kennedy (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1992). For a more recent examination, see Bernard Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

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constituted from its individual members' social desire (p. 173). Therefore, since both democracy and liberalism have the same historical roots, they cannot but be organically related. Thus, Gauchet uses these two terms interchangeably as two sides of the same coin, two offspring of the same secularization process.

Gauchet's politically-motivated historical reconstruction of religious evolution does not come without a price. His account of the origin of Western liberal democracies affects the validity of his arguments. There are at least four sets of tension directly related to Gauchet's engaged liberal historiography: structure versus agency, teleology versus contingency, discontinuity versus continuity, and, finally, "idealism" versus "materialism." To begin with, Gauchet adopts an extremely one-sided structuralist approach. His account of the Judeo-Christian lineage resembles Foucault's *episteme* and Kuhn's paradigms. Religion appears as a self-sufficient, self-enclosed, immutable superstructure organized around its own inner logic. It has no outside, nor is it confronted with an external otherness: a strikingly monistic universe. Religious symbolism tends to occupy all of world-history, leaving no space for human action, conflicts, interventions, politics. Collective and individual agents barely appear in this narrative. When they do, they merely carry out the transhistorical mission of the religious dynamic. Reversing Marx, Gauchet replaces the economic base with the ideological superstructure, substituting one form of naive structuralism for another. In his version, the laws of historical evolution are replaced by the autonomous and quasi-transcendental religious mechanisms of symbolic reproduction.

By assimilating political relations to a single religious worldview hypostatized into a transcendental history of being, Gauchet can no longer localize political struggles. He has to call the agents back from their trivial earthly activities and project them into the symbolic hyper-structure of the religious, which amounts to an ironic negation of politics, i.e., the main realm of creation, plurality and unpredictability. In his emphasis on the structural movements of the religious imaginary, in his inattention to social and political history, and in his exclusive focus on the internal logic of religious development, Gauchet's approach assumes an agent-less history. This explains his otherwise general statement that "the Protestant ethic was an epiphenomenon . . . [that] did not ultimately cause but rather furthered an already deeply entrenched silent revolution" (pp. 90-91). At the end of the book, the reader remains ill-instructed in what is political about this history of religion. In Gauchet's scheme, there is no place for conflicts, alterity, strategies, discontinuity. He constructs a historical stage insulated from human wills and populated exclusively by a self-transmutating symbolic representation. Human action, political struggles and social movements are ultimately reduced to accidental "factual conflicts and dissensions arising from human weakness" (p. 141) with no significant influence on their societies.

Gauchet does recognize that in human agency his "structural analysis reaches its limits." But he relegates the study of whatever escapes structuralism — such as

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facts, events, acts — not to himself but to "the historian's task" (p. 129). Gauchet's reluctance to question his own structuralist approach is connected with his teleological preferences. Indeed, the reason for this blatant absence from his historiography of radical discontinuities, constitutive ruptures and essential differences is his teleology. In his account, from the moment of its inception Western religion carried in latent form not only its future transformations but also the dormant seeds of its own self-destruction. As he puts it, it has "been a religion for departing from religion" (p. 4).[19] The Judeo-Christian religion — like Hegel's *Weltgeist* — "determined by a rigid logic . . . an inexorable logic" (pp. 104-105) moves inexorably through internal contradictions, in "a certain predetermined direction" (p. 125), from potentiality to actuality, "actualizing some of its structural potentialities" (p. 87), achieving ever higher levels of synthesis and reconciliation, and reaching toward the predetermined realization of its ultimate *telos*. The world-historical fulfillment of religion finally comes with its self-transcendence, i.e., its reversal into its opposed Other, which amounts to an act of self-dissolution.

According to Gauchet's teleological scheme, Western history follows a linear development. Everything started when Judaism's innate contradictions were superseded, reconciled and solved through the higher synthesis of Christianity. The advent of Jesus and the myth of Incarnation "resolve[d] Judaism's basic contradiction by inverting the messianic figure" (p. 123). Likewise, "the fracturing and discord, at the heart of Christian society, between the means for salvation and the mechanisms of domination" (p. 124), the "inherently contradictory" character of Catholicism (p. 136), its tensions, its split between the two figures of the sovereign, the Pope and the Emperor, demanded a new, higher synthesis. "In its own way," Gauchet forcefully argues, "the Church bore within itself the seeds of opposition" (p. 183). What was the Reformation other than the painstaking and tortuous internal unfolding, through theoretical struggles, of the inner logic of religious development, of its iron laws? The Protestant reversal "was itself derived from the primordial core of Christian reality . . . The modern break-up of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was basically a religious one reversing the logic of the structural link between the two orders of reality" (p. 161).

Gauchet adopts this dubious teleological system, with which he feels very uncomfortable, for two reasons (pp. 66 and 130). The first relates to his attempt to eliminate any externality, contingency or unanticipated factors that might upset his theory of the origin of democracy. If a convincing case is made to demonstrate that religious heteronomy carried the seed of political and individual autonomy, it will be extremely difficult to find alternative, external, non-religious causes. The selectiveness of his history, therefore, systematically displaces whatever

19. Of course, Gauchet cannot explain why Judaism persists as a religion. One would have expected that it would have been either absorbed into the Christian synthesis or developed into something else. The same question can be asked for Catholicism in relation to Protestantism. If the Judeo-Christian tradition comprises one and the same *eidos*, how can one interpret the fact of religious pluralism, not to mention inter-religious conflicts?

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challenges his scheme: Epicurean "natural law," Hellenistic science, Roman law and the Italian Renaissance. The second concerns Gauchet's engagement with Castoriadis' notion of history as ontological creation and radical otherness. Gauchet seeks to displace the paradigm of creation, according to which what "is" can neither be reduced to an antecedent, determining cause nor be explained in terms of a previous functional referent. Instead, it constitutes an ontological positing of new forms, figures, institutions, a radical surging forth of otherness and difference.[20] Not only "as far as origins are concerned, can there be no creation," but, moreover, "as elsewhere, the new was forced to compromise with the old, in a 'miraculous' balance between innovation and conservation" (pp. 30 and 150).

Against notions of alterity, rupture and creation, Gauchet proposes an alternative theory of evolution based on the endless reconfiguration of the same, unchangeable elements into new groups and figures. History does not bring forth anything new; it merely reorganizes what has always been. It constantly reassembles preexisting elements into different combinations. "The novelty of the present is enormous," Gauchet concedes, but only because "it arose from the reorganization of the data and articulations of the previous world. We have not changed history, but rearranged the order of the unchanging basic factors controlling its direction" (p. 165). In making too strong a case for continuities, Gauchet loses sight of the most distinctive features of the innovations that changed the course of European history from the 16th to the 18th century. Was the scientific and cultural revolution represented in the work of Corpenicus, Galileo and Newton a reconfiguration of existing materials and a continuous development of the spiritual assumptions of religion? Faced with the vital question from whence came these universal components, these primordial archetypes that constitute the raw material from which any subsequent arrangement is made, Gauchet is struck speechless, mystified by the "deepest enigma of human history" (p. 29).

This aporetic conclusion is reinforced by his excessive, immoderate antimaterialism. Oblivious to Weber's recommendation that, in addition to an analysis of the independent role of ideas, it is equally necessary to investigate how religious beliefs were influenced by social conditions — especially economic forces and class structure — and that "not ideas, but material and ideal interests, directly govern man's conduct,"[21] Gauchet falls into the trap of "maintaining such a [i.e., similar to] foolish and doctrinaire thesis as that the spirit of capitalism could only have arisen as the result of certain effects of the Reformation."[22] Thus, he dramatically underemphasizes the independent role of material evolution in favor of an exclusive "internalist" focus on "spiritual origins" (p. 45). Although he acknowledges that "the monotheistic idea alone could not do this [i.e. secularization]" (p. 74) and

20. See Castoriadis, "The Imaginary: Creation in the Social-Historical Domain" and "Time and Creation," in *World In Fragments*, *op. cit.*

21. Weber, "The Social Psychology of the World Religions," in *From Max Weber*, *op. cit.*, p. 280.

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recognizes the importance of some external factors such as physical constraints, technological changes, transformations in the economic self-production of society, social stratification and material interests, nonetheless he reduces them to merely secondary supporting forces that help catalyze a self-initiated process and assist in the birth of an already predetermined outcome (pp. 72-87).

As impressive as it may seem, Gauschet's account of secularization is limited by elaborating a theoretical framework that will neutralize the radical content of democracy in order to assimilate it within a predominant liberal perspective and minimize their substantive differences. His reinterpretation of democracy, similar to Castoriadis', is severed from any deliberate collective will and divested of any notion of the shared search for a common good.[23] Ancient Greek democracy is erased from the picture. In his effort to disassociate the democratic project from the totalitarian experience,[24] Gauchet appropriately proposes a conflictual and relational model of politics according to which the central values that establish the *eidos* of a particular society do not emanate from a single act — an absolute, final decision. These values are seen as the unintended effect of political struggles.

Instead of seeing democracy as the identity of the rulers and the ruled, Gauchet decides to focus on the "institutionalization of conflict," because it permits him to better understand "the new aris[ing] where parties interact from a continual process of exchanges, transactions, arbitrations and compromises affecting the collective experience as a whole . . . By balancing opposed factions while opening them up to competition, this organized political competition sets a pattern for social change which may be called society's self-productive relationship to itself" (p. 192). This version of democracy represents "a typical instance of a collective self-reflexivity unconscious of itself" (p. 193). With this model, he successfully avoids the threats of political voluntarism, collective omnipotence and authoritarian arbitrariness that have been attributed to democratic politics. Democratic decision-making is now explained in terms of an unintentional balance of power.

Nevertheless, Gauchet overemphasizes his point and reduces democracy to pluralism. It is one thing to distinguish democracy from totalitarianism, and another to disregard the fact that pluralism can also entail pervasive asymmetrical power relations among competing collective entities. In such cases, the need to challenge these relations requires more than "unconscious" acts and "opaque"

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22. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, *op. cit.*, pp. 183 and 91. For a more abstract and theoretical statement concerning the two directions of causal analysis that a cultural history and especially a history of religion need to follow see Max Weber, "Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy," tr. and ed. by Edward A. Shills and Henry A. Finch, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (New York: The Free Press, 1949).

23. Castoriadis, "Power, Politics, Autonomy," in *Philosophy, Politics. . ., op. cit.*

24. Here Gauchet departs from Lefort, who claims that totalitarianism can never be fully separated from democracy, as they are part of the modern experience. See Claude Lefort, *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism*, ed. and introduced by John B. Thompson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1986), pp. 237-320.

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agents. The liberal rhetoric of balances, compromises, negotiations and prudential agreements often conceals and, in any case, fails to address adequately the unequal distribution of power in society and the prevailing structures of domination.

Gauchet's derivation of the democratic order from antecedent struggles dangerously hinges on pragmatic and realistic assumptions which undermine the normative and critical aspects of democratic theory. By refusing to problematize the existence of hierarchical and heteronomous relations among different groups and to consider how these relations affect political outcomes, he proposes another version of a *modus vivendi*. Democratic politics becomes reduced to the procedural outcome of unequal power relations. Compromises are situational, the result of power differences amongst the actors. What emerges as the result of political conflicts amounts to what the stronger group or alliance of groups has succeeded in imposing. Gauchet's "culture of compromise" is ultimately a "culture of the power of the stronger" (p. 192). Moreover, in his effort to avoid the reductionism of materialist theories of politics, he goes to the other extreme, displacing the political outside and above economic and material structures. Because of this sociological blindness, he cannot theorize the complex relations that mediate between the economic, the social and the political. Consequently, he remains disturbingly blind to the ideological mystification and social fragmentation imposed by class structures, the rule of capital accumulation and the logic of market competition. What Gauchet fails to understand is that the realization of democracy presupposes the shattering of the major sites of instituted forms of domination, including those where society reproduces itself.

Stylized between a pragmatic and tamed liberal democracy or totalitarianism, Gauchet's framework misses the deliberative dimensions of political autonomy. Any democratic project presupposes some concept of the unity of the people. To be considered capable of agency, people must be seen as unified in some way. Only when a group has a strong sense of identity does it become a community capable of political action. However, this does not need to be stated in natural, pre-political or organic terms. Indeed, the body of the people can be artificially constructed through the political medium of hegemonic strategies.[25] The latter presuppose neither a homogeneous social subject nor total identifications. On the contrary, autonomy as the self-institution of society implies the creation of new political identities through transformative displacements and rearticulations among particular collective entities. The primary objective of an autonomous program is the public construction of a collective, democratic will based on an alliance of otherwise dispersed social segments. In the face of plural values, relations of power and interests, the creation of a common public space appears as a necessary precondition for democratic will-formation. In fact democratic politics is also the project to forge a sovereign people, a *demos*, out of a

25. See Antonio Gramsci, *The Modern Prince and Other Writings*, ed. and tr. by L. Marks (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1957).

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fragmented population that has been divided as to be unable of taking charge of society as a whole.[26] What is missing from Gauchet's account of democracy is the idea that democracy requires a union of power under the control of a lucid and reflective single *demos*. Rather than feitishizing divisions, pluralism, conflicts, and compromises, it would have been better if Gauchet had focused on the democratic goal to overcome the distance between rulers and ruled, a distance that, although responsible for the dispossession of the people from the political means of governance, is nonetheless accepted and praised by liberalism.

By bringing together a multiplicity of subject-positions, the project of political autonomy is broadened to integrate the various struggles within a collective subjectivity — one capable of bridging the differences among competing views and thus able to appropriate greater amounts of the instituting ground-power of the anonymous collective. Contrary to Gauchet's misplaced claims, this social subject does not need to be articulated substantively. Its different elements must simply compose a "shared ground," one organized around constructed central meanings. Obviously, Gauchet is unaware of the importance of extended practices of public dialogue and open deliberation among citizens regarding the appropriate institutions and laws of their community, the alteration of instituted norms and the positing of new ones according to the common ends that the community each time posits for itself. Fortunately, politics is not only struggle and compromise. It also embraces the moment of rational, discursive will-formation, i.e., an open set of public procedures oriented toward the self-alteration of society through explicit, concrete, collective decisions.

The political history of religion, the initial object of Gauchet's investigations, ends with two conclusions that have significant political implications for democratic thought. First, there is the disappearance from the historical trajectory of Western civilization of political alternatives that do not seem to satisfy the requirements of a liberal *modus vivendi*. Second, there is the abandonment of any normative concept of a radical democratic strategy of power. In Gauchet's account, there are no choices. Liberal, pragmatic democracy is the only viable and legitimate political option if the totalitarian spell is to be avoided. Thus, Gauschet has provided a French version of Fukuyama's thesis about the inevitability of liberalism.[27]

Andreas Kalyvas

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26. Despite their fundamental differences, Castoriadis and Habermas converge at this point: to retain a critical content, democracy must also consist of diffused mechanisms of public discursive will-formation. See Jürgen Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," in *Constellations*, Vol.1, No. 1 (1994) and Cornelius Castoriadis, "Democracy as Procedure and Democracy as Regime," *Constellations*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1997).

27. See Francis Fukuyama, *End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Avon Books, 1993).

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Death as an Industry

Robert Johnson, *Death Work: A Study of the Modern Execution Process* (first edition: Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 19908), 174 pp; (second edition: Belmont, CA: West/Wadsworth, 1998), 262 pp.

Stephen Trombley, *The Execution Protocol* (London: Century, 1993), 342 pp.

Willie Horton probably cost Michael Dukakis the American presidency. Before running, Dukakis served for ten years as governor of Massachusetts and was one of the most vociferous opponents of the death penalty. He also thought prisons to be primarily tools for education and rehabilitation. Dukakis wished the penal system would restore to criminals their lost or forfeited humanity and prepare convicts for a "return to the community"; under his administration, state prisons' inmates were allowed home leaves. Horton failed to return from one of those leaves. Instead, he raped a woman. This is what can be expected when soft-hearted liberals are in charge, pointed out Dukakis' adversary, George Bush — a staunch advocate of capital punishment. Journalists pressed Dukakis: "If Kitty, your wife, was raped, would you be in favor of capital punishment?" Dukakis insisted that he would not "glorify violence" and he bade farewell to the presidency. Victorious Bush went on to be defeated four years later by the governor of Arkansas, Bill Clinton. As governor, Clinton authorized the execution of a retarded man, Ricky Ray Rector. Some commentators think that if Horton lost Dukakis his election, Rector won Clinton's. This is probably an exaggeration: Clinton did other things to endear him to "middle America." He promised to be tough on crime, hire more policemen and put more policemen on the beat, increase the number of crimes punishable with death, build more high security prisons. Rector's contribution to Clinton's success was merely to serve as the living (sorry: dead) proof that the future president meant business; with such a feather in Clinton's cap, "middle America" could not but trust his words.

The duels on the top were replicated further down. Three candidates for the governorship of Texas used their allocated speech time at the party convention trying to outbid each other in their commitment to the death penalty. Mark White posed in front of TV cameras surrounded by the photographs of all the convicts he sent to the electric chair while he was governor. Not to be outdone, his competitor, Jim Mattox, reminded voters that he personally supervised thirty three executions. As it turned out, both candidates found themselves outsmarted by a woman, Ann

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Richards, the vigor of whose pro-death-penalty rhetorics they obviously could not match, however strong their other credentials. In Florida, outgoing governor Bob Martinez made a spectacular come-back after a long period of losing steadily in popularity polls, once he reminded voters that he signed ninety decrees of execution. In California, which at the time prided itself on not executing a single prisoner for a quarter century, Dianne Feinstein made her bid for office as "the only democrat in favor of the death penalty." In response, her opponent, John Van de Kamp, hastely let it be known that though "philosophically" against executions, which he considered "barbaric," once elected governor he would put his philosophy aside. To prove the point, he had himself photographed at the opening of a state-of-the-art gas chamber and announced that when in charge of the California department of justice he put forty-two criminals on death row. In the end, the promise to betray his convictions did not help him. Voters (three quarters of them favored the death penalty) preferred a believer — a tested executioner.

For more than a decade now, promises to be tough on crime and to send more criminals to their death have forged electoral agendas, whatever the candidate's political denomination. For current and aspiring politicians, the extension of the death penalty is the prize-winning ticket in the popularity lottery. Similarly, opposition to capital punishment means self-inflicted political death.

All this happened in the US, from where one always expects the most bizarre and extravagant news. The US is considered a land saturated with violence to an extent hardly to be found elsewhere in "peace time." In the same way that for many years a knack for genocide has been regarded a question of mysterious and unique German idiosyncrasies, there is a belief that thirst for the criminals' blood in general and the cult of electric chairs and gas chambers in particular, is an American thing, unlikely to spill over to other places. Such is not the case.

Not long ago in England a convicted pedophile, Sidney Cooke, was released from prison and returned home. His exact whereabouts were not made public. So, to be on the safe side, residents of several towns in South-West England took to the streets to track down the public enemy. Thus, in Yeovil, an assorted crowd of grandmothers, teenagers and businesswomen who seldom, if ever, engaged in a public action before, laid protracted siege to the local police station, where Cook was thought to be held in custody. People who all their lives steered clear of public protests now came, stayed, shouted "kill the bastard," and were prepared to keep vigil as long as it took. They pressed for a meeting with their MP, Paddy Ashdown. He, however, refused to join the hue-and-cry. The protest leader, to the acclaim of the gathered, was quick to pass her verdict on the uncooperating politician: "I just hope that people don't have short memories when it comes to the election."

The community welcome to Sidney Cook and the emotions which surfaced on that occasion should surprise no one. There were enough reasons to unload the accumulated fury against Cooke — providing there was an accumulated fury; and there were enough reasons for the fury to accumulate. Cooke had a name

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attached, which made him a tangible target. That gave him bodily reality few other fears possess. This made it possible to fish him out of the pap of disperse and diffuse anxieties, all the more frightening for being disperse and diffuse — unanchored fears, fears with no fixed address. Even if unseen, Cooke could still be construed as a solid object that can be handled, tied down, locked up, in, or out, neutered, even destroyed — unlike most threats, which tend to be disconcertingly oozy, evasive, spilled all over the place, un-pinpointable. Besides, those confused and confusing fears haunt most people, but in most cases they are personal. Fears that torment one person are seldom the fears that torment another, and even if they were the same, it would be damn difficult to find out and make sure that they are (the modernizing company that employs me is not the downsizing company which employs you, and each cuts its workforce for reasons of its own; my husband who plots divorce is not your wife who left you, and surely each of the two had their own motives). Cooke was a convicted pedophile, and presence of a pedophile in the neighborhood is a recognizable threat to everybody. At long last, there is a "common cause" to unite the frightened, unlike those personal disasters which divide and separate. Instead of licking one's wounds in solitude, behind drawn curtains, now there is an opportunity to take one's anxiety to the street and cry it out in chorus with other sufferers. Fears might have arrived from different quarters, but at least they can be unloaded on one target.

Reaction was much in excess of the danger. It suggested a lot of pent-up steam desperately seeking an outlet. Cooke was such an outlet, as are other criminals seen or felt to be threats to the body and to its extensions — to personal possessions, homes, neighborhoods. As to the steam, though, there is no shortage of it in the world full to the brim with endemic uncertainty saturating virtually every aspect of life: the job and source of livelihood, the professional skill on which social position rests, the partnership once "till death do us part" and now "until further notice," the aims worth pursuing today, but bound to be discredited tomorrow, the patterns of a good and happy life changing quicker than it takes to fulfil them.

There is little one can do individually or collectively to fight off uncertainty: wherever its roots may lie, they are beyond one's reach. But to make things worse, one cannot be quite sure where they are sunk in the first place. Personal safety — this is another matter. One can do something about it. One can take care of one's body, keep it fit, diet and jog, avoid poisonous food and cigarette smoke. One can take care of one's home, stuffing it with state-of-the-art locks and burglar alarms. Something can be done about the safety of the neighborhood, patrolling the streets on the watch for suspicious, because strange, faces. Above all, one cannot arrest — even slow down — the flow of events which make life conditions so fluid and evasive, so hopelessly beyond control; but one can pin down and tie down, arrest and lock up the criminals who threaten one's body and possessions.

In a volatile world — threatening because of its volatility — all slowing down, arresting, fixing in one place, immobilizing acquires new symbolic importance: it

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appears to be the solution of all troubles, the royal road to the restoration of lost stability and the gratifying feeling of security which a stable world may accord. There are not many better symbols of immobilization than prison: secure prison, prison for life, prison forever, once for all, without parole or pardon. Only one other measure surpasses imprisonment in this respect: the finality, the guaranteed irrevocability of death. Killing a criminal, one can electrocute quite a lot of nightmares. Or so it seems.

In short, the issue of imprisonment in general, and of the death sentence in particular tends to be heavily overloaded. It is burdened with the overspill of more problems than it can resolve, and many more strong, often ferocious emotions than it can absorb. "Fighting crime" and "being tough on crime" have become a substitute for coming to grips with numerous genuine troubles haunting postmodern people. On the other hand, "being lenient on crime," passing "too short" sentences, making life-long imprisonment less than life-long, opposing death sentences — all that has become a surrogate object of horror and revulsion evoked by the mind-boggling and nerve-breaking fluidity of what should have been, for personal security sake, a rock-hard foundation of life. This is why no posturing of the powers responsible for penal policy, however fierce and bellicose, is likely to satisfy the demand; it will never match the enormity and emotional ferocity of pressures coming, as they are, from the sources only tenuously, if at all, linked to the genuine or putative volume of criminality. This is why no rational argument about the effectiveness of imprisonment or wisdom of capital punishment will ever put qualms to rest, channel the pressures away or defuse the explosive mixture of anxieties unloaded in the chorus of "kill the bastard" screams.

This is why Robert Johnson's astonishment at the sight of the rising numbers of executions and the lengthening death-row queues in a "highly civilized society," such as the US, could have only arisen from mistaken assumptions. Johnson holds the not-uncommon vision of civilization as a kind of society which does away with cruelty and violence; killing people is cruel and violent — hence executions are, purely and simply, testimony to the absence or lapse of civilization. But America is a highly civilized society. How to resolve such a blatant contradiction? There is a well tried method of dealing with cognitive dissonances: by declaring the phenomenon at odds with the model, to be a relic of another model, otherwise left behind — and Johnson gladly resorts to it. The death penalty, he says, "is an anachronism that survives today because we hide it from our awareness and deny its violence" (the statement made in the first, 1990 edition, and repeated intact in the second edition nine years later, the decade of the spectacular career of death sentences and glaring publicity of executions notwithstanding). Johnson's verdict is the very opposite of the truth in each one of its three pronouncements. First, the death penalty as practiced today and as demanded day-by-day in ever larger quantities is not a relic of the past, but a product of present-day troubles and anxieties — of the ineradicable "discontents of civilization" (as

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Freud would say) in its current, not at all anachronistic, shape. Secondly, it thrives (not just "survives") precisely because, far from being "hidden from awareness," it figures most prominently in the center of public attention; it would be of no therapeutic use if not for the limelights, the blood-curdling press reports, innumerable, endlessly re-cycled, instantly repeated in slow-motion scenes of execution in TV "true story" docudramas. Third, it stays in that center not despite, but thanks to its recognized violence. Radical uncertainty seeks radical actions, on a par with the violence of anxieties and panics it breeds.

This said, Johnson proceeds to a meticulous, scrupulous and imaginative in-depth study of the dull daily routine of death-row suspended animation and the festive routine of the days of execution — above all, of the thoughts and feelings of the main actors of both. The huge data he provides may serve as rich empirical evidence for Nils Christie's insights in his pioneering study of *Crime Control as Industry* (the English version first published by Routledge in 1993). All of Christie's major theses find in Johnson's report their empirical corroboration: the routinization of killing procedure, the bureaucratic division of labor and "agentic state" of all individuals involved in the collective accomplishment, the thorough "de-emotionalization" of the whole process, neutralization of ethical considerations and moral scruples, depersonalization of the victims. Perhaps civilization has made everyone dislike and shun violence. But civilization has also invented the means to make this aversion and loathing of violence irrelevant when it comes to complicity in the commitment of violent acts, particularly when the acts are to be committed in the name of civilized values.

"Complicity is obvious in that the death row officers expressly hold the prisoners for the purpose of execution" — Johnson notes. The officers interviewed by Johnson are aware of that and cannot help feeling bad about it. "The reality of that last family visit really made me feel bad . . . It was depressing to be there" — admits one of them. But then adds, as an afterthought: "It's supposed to be part of the job, like being a doctor or something. You lose a patient and that's just it, but it's not that easy. You never forget this type of thing, but you can put it behind you." And behind they put it, most of them, most of the time. How is this accomplished?

First of all, by pushing aside moral considerations, replacing ethical measures with technical ones which arouse no emotions, and repeating what the people in charge keep saying and everyone around keeps repeating after them: "It's not a job I like or dislike. I try to go about every job in the most professional manner. If they would stop the death penalty, it wouldn't bother me. If we had ten executions tomorrow, it wouldn't bother me," says one of the wardens. "It's done professionally; it's no horseplaying. Everything is done by documentation. On time. By the book" — adds another. Secondly, all those people partake of the act of killing, but no one is a killer. At no point is there one trigger to be pulled by one finger. As Johnson puts it, "members of the death-watch team referred to themselves . . . simply as 'the team'." Working in "the team" is salutary; it is the

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team that killed without making any of its members a killer, Johnson quotes one warden's words: "We can honestly say that we did not do it." Thirdly, no member of the death-watch team performs his job for the love of killing, or even for enthusiasm for the death penalty. Motives or their absence have nothing to do with what is going on. "Only a few members of the execution team support the death penalty outright and without reservation" — Johnson observes. When filling vacancies, prison governors did not advertise for sadists or "law and order" militants. Strong feelings of whatever kind would, if anything, interfere with the smooth running of the bureaucratic procedure. Too much would depend then on the erratic and bureaucratically uncontrollable shifts of mood. It would be so much more effective were everything to be done "by the book." Personal sympathies and antipathies are better left in the cloakroom before clock-in time.

Some thoughtful people in supervisory positions go a step further; they are positively against employing men who betray a special inclination not for good performance as such, but for performing this particular kind of job because of what that job is like. "I don't want nobody who would like to do it. . . And if I suspected or thought anybody on the team really's getting a kick out of it, I would take him off the team . . . I would like to think that every one of them on the team. . . is doing it in the line of duty." This particular supervisor's idea is faithful to the modern spirit (though some fashionable writers, notably Goldhagen, still find this difficult to grasp it) and well-tested before. When recruiting soldiers for the *Einsatzgruppen*, ordered to round up and shoot out Bolsheviks and Jews on the conquered Soviet territory, precautions had been reputedly taken to eliminate rabid anti-Semites and people with sadistic inclinations. The power of modern ways and means consists precisely in making the success of the enterprise independent of the presence or absence of dedication.

Modernity would not get where it did were it to rely on things as erratic, whimsical, and thoroughly un-modern as human passions. Instead, it relies on the division of labor, science, technology, scientific management and the power of rational calculations of costs and effects — all thoroughly un-emotional stuff. Stephen Trombley's remarkable study does for the "execution industry" what the eye-opening work of Götz Aly and Susanne Heim, *Vordenker der Vernichtung* (Hamburg, 1991), had done for the Nazi murderous enterprise; it shows beyond reasonable doubt that the setting which in modern society renders mass or regular killing possible is indistinguishable from that which makes mass production and unstoppable technological progress possible. Aly and Heim documented the crucial role played by the thousands of high-class experts — engineers, architects, constructors, medics, psychologists and countless others — in making mass extermination on a heretofore unheard-of scale feasible. Trombley's carefully documented history of the electric chair claims that the first electrocution (of William Kemmler, held on 6 August 1890 in New York's Auburn State Prison) "excited a great deal of medical interest. Of the twenty five witnesses who watched Kemmler

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killed by electricity, fourteen were doctors." Similarly, the invention of the electric chair became an occasion of thorough scientific debate about the respective advantages of alternating and direct currents, and heated public argument between such supreme luminaries of modern technology as Thomas Edison and George Westinghouse. In addition, the distinguished members of Governor Hill's commission set to find the proper methods of execution fell for arguments carrying the authority of science and progress: "The invisible and imperfectly understood form of energy was quintessentially modern." It was also clean and promised to be cheap — and the members of the commission were duly impressed.

Both Johnson's and Trombley's studies are priceless. Their value lies in the information they supply and perhaps even more in the understanding and implications of modern human conduct and the way modern society works. That way renders ethical considerations and moral impulses by and large redundant. The books under review document that redundancy and show now it is achieved and reproduced daily. They also list the gains derived from that redundancy; gains not only in the straight-forward sense of profit and profitable use of resources, but also in the not immediately noticeable sense of making plausible and feasible the endeavors which would be unthinkable were they to depend on human motivations and impulses. Participants of the killing operations and the legions of scientists and engineers which supply them with the killing weapons and work out the procedure for efficient action are not evil people. Evil people did evil things at all times. It has been perhaps the unique achievement of modern civilization to enable ordinary folks, "just good workers," to contribute to the killing — and to make that killing cleaner, morally antiseptic and efficient as never before.

Zygmunt Bauman

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Carl Schmitt and Hermann Heller

David Dyzenhaus, *Legality and Legitimacy: Carl Schmitt, Hans Kelsen and Hermann Heller in Weimar* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1997), 283 pp.

Dyzenhaus' work can best be described as advocacy scholarship. Both the spirit and content of this book reflect its author's passionate commitment and argumentative approach. It is part scholarly analysis and part political prescription, synthesized in such a way that occasionally it is difficult to distinguish one from the other. Dyzenhaus embraces Gramsci's position that "philosophies of law and politics are . . . elaborations and justification of packages of political commitments" (p. 5). He also adopts the "integrative jurisprudence" of Harold J. Berman that connects "politics, morality and history" by having his "arguments move between exposition of the particular positions held by my three main protagonists, analysis of their positions, history and contemporary debates in political and legal philosophy" (pp. xi-xii). He plays "one against the other to establish 'a dialogue between absentees'." (p. 4).

From these perspectives, Dyzenhaus has written a book providing "lessons" for the present, contending that Schmitt, Kelsen and Heller confronted questions about "law and legitimacy" that are still crucial. From the start, Dyzenhaus spells out what he will conclude about each: Schmitt is significant, but his flaws call for utter rejection; Kelsen must be "understood contrary to his own intentions"; and Heller's social democratic theory is "superior" to the others. Not surprisingly, the main lesson from the past is provided by Heller, with whom Dyzenhaus identifies intellectually and politically. Heller had warned that Kelsen's legal positivism offered no defense against the Nazis, whereas supposedly Schmitt's theory "positively invited" Hitler's seizure of power (p. 5).

As Dyzenhaus develops his arguments, moving from historical to contemporary debates, his approach proves problematic in a variety of ways. In addition to confusion and inaccuracies, he displays a disturbing degree of selectively in his choice of subjects, sources and issues, as well in how they are analyzed. He neglects other prominent thinkers, such as Rudolf Smend and Gustav Radbruch, on the grounds that they lacked theory and "engagement." Yet, both were engaged. In a recent book on essentially the same subject,[1] Smend is presented as

1. Peter C. Caldwell, *Popular Sovereignty and the Crisis of German Constitutional Law: The Theory and Pratice of Weimar Constitutionalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 120-144.

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a preeminent Weimar legal theorist whose theory continues to affect constitutional issues of the Federal Republic of Germany and who, together with Heller, offers the best option for preserving and fulfilling democracy. Though Dyzenhaus claims that the Frankfurt School meets both criteria of theory and commitment, he simply relegates it to a footnote to William Scheuerman's book.[2] These other thinkers apparently would interfere with the author's main objective, which is to use three selected legal theorists as paradigms of certain schools of thought. He "avoided discussion of the secondary literature" (p. 6) for similar reasons, which, in effect, freed him to pursue his own points without the restraints of counterarguments or sometimes facts. When it suits his purpose, however, he selectively draws upon such literature or breaches his own "firmly set" boundaries of Weimar by projecting information and points back into it from the Nazi era.

In contrast to many critics of Schmitt (who dismissed his ideas out of hand), Dyzenhaus has a tension-ridden relation to him, embodying respect as well as abhorrence. He welcomes the Schmitt renaissance and in many ways he adopts Schmitt's serious, "distinctive and important" critique of liberalism, while condemning and completely rejecting his "substantive position" (pp. xi, 38). Providing one of the clearest and most accurate expositions of Schmitt's ideas on the subject, Dyzenhaus declares that this thinker's "critique captures better than contemporary critics the problematic nature of liberalism" (p. 38). He fully appreciates Schmitt's distinction between liberalism and democracy. The essence of this distinction is as follows. State neutrality, rule of law and individual rights originating in Enlightenment natural law theory constituted the metaphysical and institutional foundations of the liberal *Rechtsstaat*. But, in order to realize these goals against monarchical legal traditions and power, liberalism had to become political. Its new legal theory elevated impersonal law above the monarch, making it the prerequisite of the exercise of state power, and transferring the creation of law to a popular legislature. However, in making this necessary compromise with popular sovereignty, liberalism opened the door through which democratic forces could endanger not only individual rights, but the entire liberal *Rechtsstaat*. Ever since, liberalism has tried to contain these democratic forces through the mechanisms of parliamentarianism and judicial review. But it has been increasingly unsuccessful, due to the dilemma created by liberalism's claim to be a neutral system, which, in effect, leaves it open to exploitation and outright seizure by various social and political forces using the very political and legal institutions of liberalism. This was the dilemma Weimar faced after 1930 and, Dyzenhaus contends, still confronts liberalism today in pluralistic societies.

Dyzenhaus also provides a fairly accurate rendition of Schmitt's position on the democratic foundations of the Weimar constitution, as well as his distinction between its liberal and democratic components. To Schmitt, constitutional making

2. See William E. Scheuerman, *Between the Norm and the Exception: The Frankfurt School and the Rule of Law* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT University Press, 1994).

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and destroying power resides only in the people. He opposed altering a constitution's essence by a mere two-thirds parliamentary majority dominated by *Interessenparteien* (political parties wit special interests). Dyzenhaus raises several crucial questions about the difficulty in identifying the people as a whole, or the mechanisms by which its "act of acclamation" or expression of will could be formalized (pp. 52-54). Since Schmitt defined democracy in terms of the identity of ruler and ruled, could not such an interpretation justify the rise of a democratic dictator who could invoke the principles of popular identity and representation through plebiscites or something similar? Dyzenhaus recognizes that Schmitt's position on constitutional change could be viewed as a defense of the rights embodied in the liberal *Rechtsstaat* against "a tyrant who comes to power by legal means" and then uses that legality to abolish the existing system and its rights. In this regard, Schmitt's constitutional absolutism might provide a possible answer to liberalism's "neutrality and self-subverting vulnerability" (p. 65). But as long as liberalism in the Weimar Republic refused to acknowledge that its philosophy and system had "substance" (e.g., fundamental principles, values, etc.) and insisted on "neutrality" toward all who abide by established legal rules and procedures, no matter what their substance, liberalism was doomed. "This dilemma," Dyzenhaus concludes, "is in fact exemplified in contemporary liberal political and legal philosophy" (p. 70).

While crediting Schmitt with identifying the need for a "substantive order," Dyzenhaus spurns what he purports to be Schmitt's notions of that substance. The same brilliant Schmitt, who provided this illuminating and enduring critique of liberalism, is, according to Dyzenhaus, also an "irrational" thinker and outright "fascist." Schmitt is one of those Weimar "reactionaries" who "constructed hymns to the irrational" (pp. 5 and 14-15). He supposedly "glorified death in political battle" and had such "hatred for individualism itself" that he opposed individual rights against the state, embodied in law "to which politicians can be held accountable" (pp. 94-95). Thus, in a "pluriverse of competing myths" among which a neutral liberalism refused to decide, Schmitt allegedly offered "his own myth . . . a fascist creed whose main motivating force is the lure of the political, the romance of existential battle with the other or nonbelievers" (p. 94). Dyzenhaus' depicts the prospective Schmittian order as a homogeneous nation led by a charismatic leader whose legitimacy is irrationally based. An anti-democratic elite would determine the "internal enemies" to be totally eliminated so that the unified nation could prepare for the eternal existential battle glorified by fascists.

Rather than being a pragmatic response to Weimar crises, allegedly Schmitt's legal theory, particularly regarding presidential powers generally and Article 48 specifically, was intentionally aimed at undermining "liberal democratic legality." Schmitt considered the Weimar constitution as just another failed "liberal attempt to tame and constrain the real irrational sources of political power" (p. 15). Through an authoritarian presidency and later Hitler, liberal "relativism" would

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give way to "absolutism or infallible dictatorship" (p. 97).

Thus, according to Dyzenhaus, there was no break in Schmitt's thinking and politics in 1933, but a continuity between the Weimar and the Nazi era. In fact, Schmitt "welcomed" Hitler (pp. 39-40). Here, Dyzenhaus is reviving, without acknowledging it, Jürgen Fijalkowski's 1950s thesis, reinforced by Jeffrey Herf's work on reactionary modernists, as well as the more recent interpretations of John P. McCormick and William E. Scheuerman.[3] Forty years of research have taken this field so far beyond Fijalkowski that he is rarely, if ever, even mentioned, while the interpretation of Schmitt as an irrational romantic thinker was refuted at least ten years ago.[4] Such depictions of a Schmitt preoccupied with enemies or fantastic visions of existential battles and glorification of war are simply absurd. The origins of such interpretations and characterizing terminology, which cannot be sustained by what he actually wrote or by any other historical evidence, is baffling. Yet, with the exception of such inaccurate or misleading characterizations, it is difficult to establish from this work what Schmitt's "substantive" position is supposed to be.

Schmitt's work, and the nature of his political involvements at the end of Weimar, also rebut the notion of him as an intentional underminer of Weimar. The historical evidence establishes the case for discontinuity. Dyzenhaus must therefore construct his case through his "integrated jurisprudence" and by moving back and forth through Schmitt's works, disregarding historical and situational context and change as he combines Schmittian ideas from Weimar and the Nazi era. Dyzenhaus' method also relies on inferential argumentation about what Schmitt supposedly meant rather than what he actually stated: "resolution of this contradiction must lie in part" (p. 72); "Now recall . . . and recall also his view. . . . It must have followed . . . he must have meant" (p. 80). Dyzenhaus feels it necessary to resort to such an approach because he is convinced that Schmitt is a "coy" deceiver. "Schmitt's thought is deliberately unsystematic" for "he did not want to reveal his hand too clearly" (p. 41); he was always very concerned "to hide his deepest insights" (p. 87). Dyzenhaus writes of Schmitt's "deceptive, immanent conditionals, his fake waverings as to the true nature of the Weimar constitution." (p. 85). However, through his method, Dyzenhaus has penetrated through this veil and revealed the real Schmitt. Thus, in a single passage of *Verfassungslehre* he finds the "clue to Schmitt's understanding of the

3. Jürgen Fijalkowski, *Die Wendung zum Führerstaat: Ideologische Komponenten in der politischen Philosophie Carl Schmitts* (Cologne, 1958), which Dyzenhaus does not include in his bibliography; Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984); John P. McCormick, *Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism: Against Politics as Technology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Scheuerman, *Between the Norm and the Exception*, *op. cit.*

4. See Joseph W. Bendersky, "Carl Schmitt and the Conservative Revolution," *Telos* 72 (Summer, 1987),pp. 27-42.

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politics of liberalism" and a "glimpse into the deep structure of his work" (p. 69).

Dyzenhaus never mentions, let alone address the difficulty caused by the fact that this same approach was recently used by Heinrich Meier and Andreas Koenen to reach completely different conclusions. They, too, peered through the alleged deception to discover not Dyzenhaus' fascist Schmitt, but Schmitt's "hidden dialogue" with Leo Strauss, and they determined that Schmitt was fundamentally a political theologian, whose faith in revelation and Christian eschatological history were the major motivating factors in his writing and political activities and the keys to understanding him.[5] Completely ignoring this recent scholarship reflective of the "theological twist" in Schmitt historiography, Dyzenhaus repeatedly and harshly dismisses as "apologists" scholars who do not agree with his interpretation of Schmitt and the end of Weimar, or his depiction of Schmitt as a fascist. But nowhere does Dyzenhaus explain exactly what makes them apologists or why they would want to play this role, particularly if their own intellectual and political perspectives and affiliations are not in the least Schmittian.

This false attribution of Schmittian affinities and unfounded charges of apologetics were rebutted when they surfaced among the German left in the 1980s.[6] In his recent book, McCormick, who shares Dyzenhaus' view of Schmitt as a fascist, has stated that those ". . . most frequently and violently criticized as apologetic . . . do not in fact promote Schmitt for any particular political ideology."[7] Since the refutation of these charges a long time ago, the most dramatic change in Schmitt scholarship has not been any promotion of Schmittian ideas by alleged apologists, but the growth of interest in his theory by the Left and by liberals. Ironically, Dyzenhaus himself has internalized more of Schmitt's ideas, especially regarding his critique of liberalism, and has argued more for his contemporary relevance than those he seeks to taint as apologists.

Dyzenhaus' contention that Schmitt's theory "positively invited" Hitler's seizure of power is equally problematic, as is his questionable historical interpretation of the end of Weimar and Schmitt's relation to it. Dyzenhaus presents a simplistic dichotomy in which Weimar was either inevitably doomed or intentionally subverted by anti-democrats "through a cool deliberate plan" (p. 22). He holds to the view of deliberate destruction "by unscrupulous methods," as argued by the German historian Eberhard Kolb, whom he relies upon almost exclusively

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5. See Andreas Koenen, *Der Fall Carl Schmitt: Sein Aufstieg zum "Kronjuristen des Dritten Reiches"* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995) and Heinrich Meier, *Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss: The Hidden Dialogue: Including Strauss's Notes on Schmitt's "Concept of the Political" and Three Letters from Strauss to Schmitt*, trans. J. Harvey Lomax (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). See also Joseph Bendersky's review in the *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 69, No 4 (December 1997), pp. 891-893, which questions these theological interpretations of Schmitt.

6. See Joseph W. Bendersky, "Carl Schmitt as *Occasio*," in *Telos* 78 (Winter 1988-89), pp.191-208.

7. McCormick, *Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism*, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

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for his historical information. Those scholars who have considered the presidential system (1930-1932) an attempt to guide Germany through a potentially fatal crisis Dyzenhaus inaccurately identifies as adherents to the thesis of inevitable collapse, even though they have never argued such a thesis. This type of questionable history ignores not only the variety of tenable interpretations, but the complexities of the political, economic and constitutional crises of those years.

When the presidential system was instituted in 1930, no one could have predicted the new crises that would emerge or the difficult political choices that would arise over the next few years. Many unassociated with what Dyzenhaus sees as right-wing conspirators considered the presidential system a defense of Weimar, including the Catholic Center Party, the *Zentralverein* of German Jews, Carl J. Friedrich at Harvard, and even US military attaches in Germany. If one is going to attach so much significance to this historical situation, then one needs to take into account such perceptions and expectations, as well as to acquire a balanced perspective of the historical scholarship on the subject. Inexplicably, Dyzenhaus limited this kind of research to Heinrich Brüning, but this at least led him to concede that some historians hold that this first chancellor of the presidential system had sought not to destroy Weimar, but to guide it through crisis-ridden times. But, then, Dyzenhaus fails to include that Schmitt began his relation with the presidential system as a constitutional adviser to the Brüning government, and that, between 1930 and 1932 (almost its entire history), his theories and legal opinions supported the policies and political strategies of that government.

Dysenhaus also overlooks the complex motives, changing circumstances, and political dynamics of 1932, as well as the various political alignments within the presidential government. Schmitt was affiliated with Schleicher, not Papen. Even Hans Mommsen, a source Dyzenhaus claims to have used, recognized this essential difference, observing: "Schleicher emphatically dissociated himself from the concept of a radical break with the existing constitutional system in favor of the 'new order' that had been propagated by Papen and Gayl. He made no effort whatsoever to implement their plans for constitutional change or to anchor the presidential system in law . . . he clearly did not share Zehrer's belief in an epochal restructuring of the existing political order. For Schleicher's primary concern was always to avoid the constitutional conflict that weighed so heavily on Hindenburg's mind and to restore the effectiveness of the presidential regime . . . Schleicher was counting on a rapid economic upswing and was simply playing for time until that materialized."[8]

Dyzenhaus likewise dismisses the notion that the July 20 declaration of a state of emergency in Prussia might have been viewed by some in the presidential government (and Schmitt) as necessitated by political paralysis, widespread and increasing political violence, the real threat of civil war, and efforts to find

8. Hans Mommsen, *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy,* tr. by Elborg Forster and Larry Jones (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), p. 492.

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some strategy for containing mounting Nazi strength and momentum toward a seizure of power. To Dyzenhaus, all political figures in the government and their constitutionalists conspired to intentionally undermine Weimar. Among those respected historians uninvolved in the Schmitt debate who might be cited as more accurately portraying Schmitt's role is Dietrich Orlow, a leading authority on Prussia. Certainly no apologist, Orlow has written that in Schmitt's view the president "had the right and duty to take whatever action he regarded as necessary to save the body politic from disintegration. . . . In July 1932 a state of constitutional emergency existed, and the federal president and cabinet acted correctly in order to preserve the viability of the republic."[9] While critical of what he calls the authoritarianism and "conservative restorationism" of Brüning, Papen and Schleicher, Orlow notes that they still "respected the fundamentals of the *Rechtsstaat*."[10] For Dyzenhaus, however, such adherence to the liberal *Rechtsstaat*, like the high court's decision upholding the Reich government's position and most of Schmitt's relevant constitutional interpretations, would merely serve as another example of the problem with liberal Weimar jurisprudence and its normativist legal positivism.

Dyzenhaus leaves out completely Schleicher's January 1933 plan in which Schmitt was involved. This crucial historical event challenges Dyzenhaus' contention that the presidential system was never intended to stabilize the situation or was necessary to stop the Nazis. Schleicher recommended a temporary state of emergency until economic recovery programs restored a political climate in which parliamentary government could have any hope of functioning with even minimal effectiveness. The constitution and the political system would not be altered during this period of authoritarian-directed recovery, but the immediate threat to the survival of the entire system would be removed by legally suppressing the Nazi and communist parties through force if necessary. As Henry A. Turner has remarked, "the likely establishment of an authoritarian military regime would almost certainly have spared humanity the disastrous consequences of Adolf Hitler's installation at the head of the German government." Indeed, along with Schmitt, the SPD leader Otto Braun understood this; he was willing to back Schleicher's rule by decree in return for certain political concessions. Even Dyzenhaus' main historical source, Kolb, has agreed that "if successful, the planned breach of the constitution and the resulting declaration of a state of emergency would have prevented the Nazi takeover."[11]

Dyzenhaus himself subsequently shows that Hans Kelsen, a liberal supporter

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9. Dietrich Orlow, *Weimar Prussia, 1929-1933: The Illusion of Strength* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991), p. 243.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 250.

11. See the Tenth Annual Lecture (1996) by Eberhard Kolb and comments by Henry A. Turner at the German Historical Institute, Washington, D.C., *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 20 (Spring 1997), pp. 24-26. Orlow, *Weimar Prussia*, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

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of Weimar democracy, also ultimately concluded that "the interpretation of Article 48 entailed by the President's decree is not only as plausible as the court's, but even from a political standpoint, to be preferred" (p. 128). Moreover, Dyzenhaus follows his assault on Schmitt's alleged politics and goals with a critique of Hans Kelsen's pure theory of law, in which Dyzenhaus actually adopts Schmitt's position against normativism. In this regard, Dyzenhaus follows part of the Weimar and contemporary Left in using Schmitt's analyses and theories to attack liberalism, as exemplified in Kelsen's attempt to preserve the purity and neutrality of law, and in a legal system by insulating them from ethics, politics, ideology, etc. Ignoring the Schmittian "reality of politics," Dyzenhaus writes: "Kelsen thus illustrated perfectly liberalism's desire to subsume politics under a norm and its substantive inability to do so." Similarly, Kelsen's adherence to liberal neutrality offered no protection against "Satan's" subversion of the system from within, nor even any way of discerning "who Satan is" (p. 156).

A meticulous analysis and assessment of Dyzenhaus' treatment of Kelsen should be left to Kelsen scholars. It is worth pointing out, however, that just as in his approach to Schmitt, Dyzenhaus feels justified not only in handling this normativist in a way that is "anathema to most Kelsen scholars," but one that is also "contrary to Kelsen's own views" (pp. 104-105). Here, too, Dyzenhaus has a "rare and important glimpse" into the "practical" meaning of Kelsen. However, after invoking Schmitt to demolish Kelsen, Dyzenhaus concludes that both thinkers had it wrong. Neither Kelsen nor Schmitt, Dyzenhaus avers, had the "right way of telling the story" of the problems and possible solutions for politics and society caused by a morally relativistic modern world without god and truth. The implication of Kelsen's legal positivism was that of a "pluriverse of fractured visions" in which truth is determined by domination, whereas the Schmittian version supposedly rendered this outcome in terms of the "triumph of the will in the battle of irrational forces" (p. 160).

The correct way of telling the story belongs to Hermann Heller, who, in his critique of Kelsen and Schmitt, offered a "more desirable picture of law and politics" (p. 160). Little known outside Germany, where he never achieved the stature of Kelsen or Schmitt, in recent years Heller has been retroactively elevated by admirers such as Dyzenhaus and others to the status of both. Here was the Social Democratic Weimar alternative to the liberal Kelsen and the "fascist" Schmitt. In reality, though, Heller's active SPD partisanship and volatile temperament kept him relatively "marginalized" in Weimar political and legal theory, and his early death in 1933 preempted any contribution in the crucial decades of dictatorship, destruction and reconstruction that followed.[12] How much Heller borrowed from Schmitt in certain significant areas is striking: the political, as

12. See Caldwell, *Popular Sovereignty and the Crisis of German Constitutional Law*, *op. cit.*, p. 127. While a harsh critic of Schmitt, Caldwell also offers a more frank and balanced survey of Heller than does Dyzenhaus.

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well as the historical and sociological nature of law; the importance of decision, sovereignty, homogeneity; even the need of the state to decide friend from enemy and to defend itself against threats from within and without. In commenting on this intellectual debt in so many areas, Peter Caldwell states that when it came to foreign affairs in particular, there was no substantive distinction between the state thinking of Heller and Schmitt.[13] But Dyzenhaus is probably correct in arguing that Heller not only developed his own position on several of these questions in political and legal theory, but saw Schmitt as his "principle political target," because he considered him to be such a danger to democracy and the rule of law (p. 163). To Heller, Schmitt symbolized the broader attempt by the bourgeoisie to defend its property against the proletariat. In this respect, Schmitt's ideas might be seen as the logical response to a failed liberalism which, from the beginning, intended that sacrosanct individual rights, as well as the institutions of parliament, the judiciary and legal positivism serve to fend off the forces of democracy and popular sovereignty. As a last resort, the bourgeoisie, like Schmitt, was willing to abandon liberalism and the rule of law in favor of a fascist power to protect its property (p. 193).

Nonetheless, though a harsh critic of the past and current practice of bourgeois liberalism, Heller believed that, rather than being abandoned, the fundamental principles of liberalism had to be transformed into a democratic legal theory. Individual rights and the rule of law were significant contributions to the Western cultural tradition that Heller wanted to integrate into a new legal order that would unite "law, power, and ethics," while realizing the principle of popular sovereignty. To a democratic socialist such as Heller, this meant nothing less than the transmutation of the liberal *Rechtsstaat* into a "social *Rechtsstaat*." It would be a system that promoted democratic social equality, not merely equality before the law and the universal franchise as liberalism had done (pp. 195-196).

There are serious problems with the theoretical and practical nature of Heller's ideas, and with Dyzenhaus' explanation of them. Dyzenhaus claims that Heller offers a rationally-based political and legal theory as an alternative to Schmitt's supposed irrational thought. Yet, Heller's thinking is either murky or incomplete on essential points. While insisting that ethical principles should underlie all law, he never detailed what these were, except to offer vague notions of the importance of law and the inherent self-worth of the individual. Such notions are, of course, highly attractive and difficult to disagree with in principle or as abstract theoretical positions, but quite troublesome and divisive when trying to concretize them in society and politics or even to find some agreement on their essence and pragmatic application. The problem is compounded by Heller's abandonment of natural law theory and by his belief that ethical principles are culturally bound. Despite Dyzenhaus' attempts to deny it, this smacks of relativism and raises the old Schmittian decisionist dilemma of who decides what is

13. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

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ethical, moral or true in an actual pluralistic society (e.g., Weimar) that lacks a basic consensus on such principles. Neither is it clear how such individualism could be reconciled with Heller's socialist values and goals. Somehow, these ethical principles would be identified and then be realized in positive law through the "process of democratic reason" (p. 205).

Noteworthy as it is remarkable is Heller's own recognition of the need for an "authoritarian moment" in which such debates would necessarily reach the point where they would have to be shut off and the issue solved by power. This concept not only makes Heller's thinking more murky, but is undeniably a type of Schmittian decisionist thought. Furthermore, Heller's selective notion of essential principles clashed with those of Weimar bourgeois liberals. Many social, political and legal battles had at their center the question of the liberal sanctity of property versus the need to infringe on it to achieve the kinds of social justice and equality championed by Heller. Clearly, his "hostility to judicial review," a cherished liberal value, stemmed mostly from his belief that this served as a bourgeois mechanism to defend class domination and property by thwarting the sovereign democratic will of the people as manifested in the legislature, thereby preventing the transmutation of the liberal *Rechtsstaat* into the social *Rechtsstaat*.

Surprisingly, neither Dyzenhaus nor Heller ever explain what would have constituted the social *Rechtsstaat* or social equality in Weimar (or, for that matter, contemporary society). Surely, it meant more than equality before the law and voting rights. Would it involve some infringements on bourgeois property, or a substantial redistribution of wealth and status, and possibly state regulation or domination over capitalist forces? In a 1931 essay Heller strongly suggested the latter, as he called for the "authoritarian superordination" of the state over the economy in order to dislodge "private capitalist forces" supposedly monopolizing the state. This revealing major aspect of Heller, like his call for an "authoritarian state" legitimated by a popular plebiscite to counterbalance an ineffectual parliament, receives from Dyzenhaus a brief paragraph that belies its wide-ranging significance for his theory and the political implications for the future of the Republic and German society generally (p. 207). Was this a plausible solution to Weimar's problems or a confirmation of the worst fears of the non-socialist segments of German society and a prescription for civil war?

Also noteworthy is that elsewhere, in an article providing a concise summary of the book under review,[14] Dyzenhaus paints an even paler image of Heller and his ideas. There is no hint of Heller's assault on the "bourgeoisie" as a class that had established "democracy and the *Rechtsstaat* . . . not as intrinsic goods but as a means to obtain the security of private property" or that he believed the bourgeoisie would sacrifice the rule of law to a fascist dictator to defend its property (as argued in the book, p. 193). Neither is Heller's and Dyzenhaus' key concept

14. David Dyzenhaus, "Legal Theory in the Collapse of Weimar: Contemporary Lessons?" in *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 91, No. 1 (March 1997), pp.129-133.

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and objective — the "social *Rechtsstaat*" — mentioned in the article. Merely referring to the need for "social equality," Dyzenhaus writes only of the "democratic *Rechtsstaat*" which promises "freedom and equality for all citizens." Even Schmitt looks better, as Dyzenhaus depicts him here not as a "fascist" forerunner of the Nazis fostering irrational romantic mythologies of existential battles and glorification of violence, but simply as a "communitarian existentialist" and the "foremost legal theorist on the Right."[15]

Another troublesome aspect of Heller evaded in Dyzenhaus' book concerns the *völkisch* ideas embodied in his theory and his heavy reliance upon conservative theorists, for which Left and Center socialists subjected him to scathing criticism. Among the radical Right theorists receptive to Heller's work was the same Otto Koellreutter who, beginning in 1934, spearheaded the attack of Nazi theorists against Schmitt on the grounds that his non-racial theories and traditional Hegelian conservatism were obstacles to the fulfillment of National Socialist ideology.[16] This appears more peculiar in light of the fact that Dyzenhaus makes a special point of deviating from his examination of Schmitt's Weimar legal theory in order to enter into a diatribe about the jurist's anti-Semitism and the alleged neglect of this issue and its relation to Schmitt's theory by so-called apologists. However, Dyzenhaus deals not with Schmitt's legal theory, nor even with his Weimar years, but with what Schmitt wrote during the Nazi period. Dyzenhaus' protests to the contrary, this aspect of Schmitt's reprehensible compromises with the Nazis has long been dealt with at length by those scholars he criticizes. Similarly, his distortion of George Schwab's treatment of Schmitt's anti-Semitism during the Third Reich is as questionable as it is unnecessary and inappropriate. Dyzenhaus' accusations can be dismissed easily by comparing the relevant passages in Dyzenhaus and Schwab.[17]

The fact remains, that to date no one has been able to show that anti-Semitism or racism played any role in Schmitt's personal associations or theories before 1933. The evidence that Dyzenhaus himself cites to make the case for anti-Semitism actually dates from the Nazi and post-WWII periods. Although these passages in Schmitt's postwar diaries necessitate a systematic reassessment of this entire question, it must be noted that they do not suggest any anti-Semitic dimension to his Weimar theories.[18] Neither has the voluminous Schmitt *Nachlass* disclosed any anti-Semitism in his Weimar politics or ideas. In addition, it has been well established for at least twenty years by an abundance of documentation that the

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-122.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 129, 230; Joseph W. Bendersky, *Carl Schmitt: Theorist for the Reich* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 222-227.

17. Compare pp. 98-101 in Dyzenhaus with what Schwab actually argued in *The Challenge of the Exception: An Introduction to the Political Ideas of Carl Schmitt between 1921 and 1936*, 2nd ed. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), pp. 134-138.

18. Joseph W. Bendersky, "Schmitt and Hobbes," in *Telos* 109 (Fall 1996), pp. 122-129.

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Nazis completely ignored Schmitt during Weimar and that his ideas had no impact on Nazi theories or policies. Dyzenhaus' dubious claim that Schmitt's friend-enemy theory justified the elimination of Jews neglects the fact that it has been documented that the Nazis harshly criticized and rejected his friend-enemy concept precisely because its non-racial character was antithetical to their ideology. Indeed, far from being a prescription for Nazi oppression, Schmitt's friend-enemy perspectives were quite similar to, among others, Sigmund Freud's Hobbessian views on the anthropological nature of men, group identities, and the conflicts and wars resulting from these.[19]

Clearly, Schmitt's Weimar political and legal theory was neither racial nor involved any type of *völkisch* thinking. These were not even areas Schmitt found it necessary to investigate and certainly not to integrate into his Weimar theories, whereas Heller's *völkisch* orientation emerged repeatedly in his writings in the 1920s. Heller routinely employed the kind of right-wing *völkisch* terminology that Schmitt would only begin adopting in the Third Reich, while striving to make his works and language more compatible with Nazi ideology. Nonetheless, Dyzenhaus' one brief paragraph on Heller's anthropology does not offer the slightest hint of this dimension of his thinking and conveniently eschews the incriminating *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil) terminology he used in articulating his *völkisch* nationalistic views. Dyzenhaus merely states (correctly) Heller's criticism of those racial theorists who purported to establish the existence of pure races endowed with immutable distinguishing characteristics and racial souls that supposedly divide them into hierarchies of inferior and superior types (p. 190). But Heller's startling statement on the "negro question" in the US as an anthropological problem as opposed to one of culture suggests that he was susceptible to some racial thinking. Dyzenhaus relegates this to a footnote and dismisses it as "odd remarks" inconsistent with his general theory (p. 192).

It is obvious from Heller's collected writings that he believed in a "national character" determined by much more than the culture and history he also stressed. He wrote: "The most vigorous and enduring formations of human communities are not based upon organizational, purposeful associations of interest, but have an organic, naturalistic core. The most important naturalistic interrelationships which bind men together without their intervention and distinguish them from others is blood and soil, ancestry and geographical environment. Both form the innate foundations of the nation."[20] Of course, this dimension of Heller should not be overemphasize and read, instead, within the proper context of his overall thought. The same is true of the problematic aspects of Schmitt. But such

19. See Joseph W. Bendersky, "Carl Schmitt and Sigmund Freud on the Concept of the Enemy," Conference on "The Relevance of Carl Schmitt's *Concept of the Political*," The Graduate School of the City University of New York (October 29, 1990).

20. Hermann Heller, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 3 Vols., ed. by Christoph Müller (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 2nd ed. 1992); Vol., pp. 452-455.

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ideas need to be acknowledged and integrated into any general explanation of him, for they do raise interesting questions about how they might relate to his concepts of homogeneity, national identity, relations among states, etc. They are certainly necessary for any comprehensive understanding of a figure to whom such past and present importance is attached.

In the last part of his book, dealing with Heller's relevance for contemporary legal theory, Dyzenhaus again relies on Schmitt's critique of liberalism when analyzing and then rejecting recent efforts by John Rawls to develop a theory of political liberalism. When confronting the Schmittian dilemma of liberalism vs. democracy, Rawls ultimately "opts for liberalism over democracy" (p. 248). More promising than Rawls is Jürgen Habermas' democratic theory, which Dyzenhaus describes as a less satisfactory reinvention of Heller (though he acknowledges that Habermas never makes any reference to the Weimar jurist). Dyzenhaus criticizes Habermas for his adherence to Enlightenment efforts to subdue the realities of power through rational legality. True democrats, such as Dyzenhaus and Heller, have "trust" in the process and outcome of reasoned democratic deliberation as opposed to constraining democratic forces through institutions or preempting debate on certain fundamental issues and values. Thus, Heller remains the answer to what Dyzenhaus believes is the current retreat from egalitarianism and concurrent attempts to fortify liberal values by reviving legal positivism and holding to the purely formal characteristics of the liberal *Rechtsstaat*. But Dyzenhaus concludes that Heller's democratic theory can only succeed in furnishing this answer through the realization of the "social *Rechtsstaat*" and its "changing ideals of social equality" (p. 258). The problem with this prognosis is that no one knows what Heller or Dyzenhaus really mean by this.

Joseph W. Bendersky

U.S. Postal Service, Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation. 1.A. Title of publication: Telos. B. Publication no. 10770. 2. Date of Filling: February 25, 1999. 3.Frequency of issue: quarterly. A. No. of issues published annually: 4. B. Annual Subscription price: $95.00. 4. Complete mailing address of known office of publication: 431 East 12th Street, New York, New York 10009. 5. Complete mailing of the headquarters or general business offices of the publishers: same. 6. Full names and complete mailing addresses of publisher, editor and managing editor: Publisher, Paul Piccone, 431 East 12th Street, NY 10009. Editor, Paul Piccone, 431 E. 12th Street, NY 10009. Managing Editor, Jennifer Paul, 431 E. 12th Street, NY 10009. 7. Owner: Paul Piccone, 431 East 12th Street, NY 10009. 8. Known Bondholders: none. 10. Extent and nature of circulation: first number in each category is average number of copies each issue during the preceding 12 months; second number is the actual number of copies of the single issue published nearest to filing date. A. Total no. copies: 1800, 1823. B. Paid circulation. 1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, and counter sales: 621, 612. 2. Mail subscriptions: 1145, 1089. C. Total paid circulation: 1766, 1701. D. Free distribution by mail, carrier or other means; samples, complimentary and other free copies: 0, 0. E. Total distribution (sum of C and D): 1766, 1701. F. Copies not distributed: 1. Office use, left over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing: 34, 122. 2. Return from news agents: none, none. G. Total (sum of E, F1, and F2): 1800, 1823. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete, (signed) Paul Piccone, publisher.

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Inquisitorial Tolerance

Robert Weissberg, *Political Tolerance: Balancing Community and Diversity* (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1998), 273 pp. + x.

Modern philosophy assumes that tolerance is part of modernity's essence. It views tolerance as humanity's voice of conscience, nature's moral law, through which the human spirit progresses. As such, tolerance is one of modernity's sacred cows, a conflated metaphysical and moral principle.

Weissberg is an arch-defender of thoughtful tolerance, who finds intolerable the growing misunderstanding of tolerance. His general thesis is that, properly understood, tolerance is a political, not an attitudinal concept. He contends that, increasingly during this century, Americans have replaced *political* tolerance with a Utopian ideal of tolerance as *the psychological acceptance of endless differences*. He maintains that a free society and unlimited attitudinal tolerance are contradictory. Pursuit of unlimited psychological acceptance entails ever-widening state coercion of personal human motivation. As he puts it: "A monster of rapacious appetites is being assembled. To wit, if children fall short in appreciating all those people who 'differ,' no matter how obnoxious or dangerous this uniqueness, the only sensible remedy is to push even harder, develop fresh programs, and tinker even more with the deficient curriculum. Permanent failure authorizes permanent effort" (p. 252).

Weissberg claims that Americans often defend tolerance as a self-evident virtue predicated on "three barely articulated and rarely challenged premises" (p. 2): 1) the general predisposition, apart from context, that to be highly tolerant is a praiseworthy civic and personal virtue; 2) individually and collectively, tolerance is too scarce in America; and 3) increased tolerance of political diversity would help heal rankling political divisions. He questions these assumptions by maintaining that: 1) promoting attitudinal tolerance is a vice, not a virtue; 2) tolerance is not scarce, but flourishes in America; and 3) increased attitudinal tolerance will undermine, not enhance American society. According to Weissberg, most tolerance literature promotes attitudinal tolerance as a self-evident democratic good. Yet, attitudinal tolerance is a utopian dream. Real tolerance is intricate, complicated and political, inviting no simple explanation, elegant theory, or cure-all prescription. The contemporary concept of attitudinal tolerance is a result of the influence of social science surveys. While these surveys claim objectivity, Weissberg shows how, from their start in the mid-1930s until the present, they have presumed an attitudinal notion of tolerance and generated a social science tolerance industry.

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Following John Locke and John Stuart Mill, Weissberg argues that a free society cannot work without extensive intolerance. While proponents of unlimited tolerance often cite Locke and Mill, Weissberg correctly notes Locke's attitudinal and political intolerance of atheists, certain Protestant sects and Roman Catholics; and Mill's intolerance of those not "sufficiently rational" and of "offenses against decency" (pp. 81, 84-85). Locke and Mill advocated political tolerance, limited acceptance of those they dislike, not unlimited attitudinal tolerance. Weissberg argues that no political society: 1) can or should tolerate every unpopular cause; or 2) has the ability or right to demand attitudinal tolerance on the part of its citizens. Political tolerance should be judged solely in terms of the obstacles citizens face to air their views and promote their causes. Using this measure, he concludes that claims about American intolerance are grossly overstated.

Weissberg supports his case by analyzing the alleged American intolerance of homosexuals. If the treatment of homosexuals is measured by political, not attitudinal tolerance, there is little evidence of widespread political intolerance — something that often flourishes despite attitudinal intolerance. Tolerance of homosexuality as a predilection differs from tolerance of it as a political cause, whose goal is cultural transformation. Weissberg maintains that political tolerance does not require unqualified acceptance, and does not rule out making distinctions, defining limits, making moral judgments, and defending the *status quo*.

Since attitudinal tolerance is unworkable, but some political acceptance of unconventional behavior is necessary for a democratic society, Weissberg calls, on the one hand, for abandoning unworkable, state thought-control tolerance and, on the other, for studying previously-tested political survival mechanisms dealing with contemporary problems of political tolerance. Such mechanisms, like politically-coerced tolerance, communal separatism, and organized resistance have long enabled unpopular groups to flourish. Thus, through legislation, the state can compel people to put up with each other in practice without trying to compel everyone to like everyone else. For years, the US all-volunteer army has been doing this with substantial success. When necessary, people who cannot get along can be physically separated. Locke thought this type of disengagement necessary at times. In the US, negotiated disengagements enabled the Amish, Doukhobors, and Mormons to survive. In densely populated cities, groups such as blacks, homosexuals, Hasidic Jews, and Arabs survive. For the most part, they get along through emotional and physical detachment and, at times, political resistance. In short, Weissberg claims that "*political* tolerance can coexist with overwhelming *personal* intolerance" (p. 221) without any need for governmental thought control. As he says, "We cannot condemn people for loathing groups who insist on inflaming. Without doubt, almost any tendency or inclination — and many unconventional behaviors, to boot — can be tolerated if reasonable accommodations are made. Tolerance is a two-way street" (p. 222).

Weissberg maintains that government-sponsored attitudinal tolerance does not decrease, but encourages, hatred and bigotry. He opposes unworkable tolerance

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mechanisms, those that undermine ordered liberty. Attitudinal tolerance as a political goal is false, unworkable, and a step toward totalitarianism. Political tolerance can never be attitudinal, because there are no bounds to the demand for attitudinal tolerance. Tolerance presumes communities and, to survive, communities must protect themselves from anarchy and subversion. In short, political order cannot exist without some separation and just discrimination. Today, however, tolerance is wrongly conflated with moral and cultural relativism. The "tolerance industry" promotes the notions that being judgmental is a sign of intolerance and that hatred, prejudice, and discrimination are the only officially reprehensible vices.

Weissberg demurs. He maintains that the idea of political tolerance presumes that some things are better than others, that, at times, one must be judgmental, and must discriminate against injustice. Because cultural heterogeneity is necessary for democratic existence, but cannot be preserved by government-promoted attitudinal tolerance, Weissberg suggests five criteria for implementing a workable program of political tolerance: 1) in place of laws aiming at psychological transformation, all things being equal, homogeneity should be preserved through a combination of force of law, communal separatism, and organized resistance; 2) communal instruction in tolerance must reflect, not replace parental desires; 3) "value-neutral" indoctrination should be replaced with moral instruction that accepts principles of moral right and wrong; 4) direct compulsion should be directed toward external, not internal thoughts; and 5) state-sponsored indoctrination is impermissible in tolerance education.

In a postscript, Weissberg writes that America is an "*incredibly* tolerant nation," that the intolerance alarm is specious, and that "an entire industry flourishes dedicated to fabricating cries about ever-newly constructed wolves" (p. 255). He maintains that flight from moral judgment, the refusal to draw needed distinctions, and to choose and rank when necessary, undermine political tolerance. Despite outcries to the contrary, Weissberg contends that virtually the entire agenda pushed by the proponents of attitudinal tolerance already exists in political reality: "From fat children to those speaking nonconventional English, from proud, open lesbian teachers to militant Marxist professors of philosophy, all flourish unbothered by dreaded government intrusion" (p. 257). Thus, the push to conflate attitudinal with political tolerance is a mindlessly utopian campaign, doomed to fail, and "a horrendous disservice to what makes civilization possible" (p. 258).

Weissberg may be faulted for having ignored thinkers such as Hume, Rousseau, Kant and Hegel, who have had a tremendous impact on the contemporary understanding of tolerance, perhaps even more than Locke and Mill. No treatment of the West's understanding of tolerance would be complete without examining their views. But he makes no claim to provide an exhaustive account of the contemporary understanding of tolerance, only a better one.

Peter A. Redpath

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Multicultural Homogenization

Nicholas DeMaria Harney, *Eh, Paesan! Being Italian in Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 209 pp. + xii.

Ebonics — Italian Style

Usually, one has to read a book in order to evaluate it. Harney's book on "Italian" immigrants has the dubious distinction of capturing much of what is wrong with it on its cover. The very title prefigures its basic problem. *Eh, Paesan*! presumably refers to a particular greeting these immigrants employ in addressing each other. But there is no *standard* term "*paesan*." The proper Italian word is "*paesano*," which in its many dialectal renditions becomes "*paisah,*" "*paisan*" or variations thereof. The same goes for the antecedent "*Eh!*" which in most Southern Italian dialects is actually "*uí,*" "*ué,*" "*eeeeh,*" etc. At best, "*Eh*" is a Torontonian or, more generally, an Eastern Canadian idiosyncrasy which, if used by immigrants at all, is much more drawn out than the curt native version. In other words, there is no common idiom among those immigrants who came from Italy to Toronto in such large numbers that they now constitute the city's second largest minority after the "Chinese." Whatever they speak, it is certainly not what Harney call "Italese," i.e., "the ethnic dialect . . . created by the lived experience of Italian immigrants from different parts of the peninsula"[1] (p. 103).

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1. Of the three articles Harney cites to document the existence of a new common language, only one, Gianrenzo P. Clivio, "Su Alcune Caratteristiche dell'Italese di Toronto," in *Il Veltro*, Vol. XXIX (May-August 1985), tentatively postulates the existence of "Italese," and then merely as a linguistic device to deal with "the semantic obstacles [*nodi*] that the diversity of referents could pose to those who would want to use Italian exclusively" (p. 490). As for the other two, one is simply a plea for the teaching of Italian as something different from the various dialects spoken by immigrants in Toronto — a language "they invariably bring . . . back home, sensitizing their parents and grandparents linguistically in the process." See Marcel Danesi and Alberto Di Giovanni, "Italian as a Heritage Language in Ontario: A Historical Sketch," in *Polyphony*, Vol. 11 (1989), p. 92. The second does propose to discuss "Italo-Canadese" as a variation of both "Standard Italian" and "its Peninsular dialects." Yet, it immediately redefines this "Italo-Canadese" more precisely, first, as "a generalized southern Italian version of Standard Italian," and then, almost as an afterthought, as a linguistic device *sui generis*. Danesi and Di Giovanni never bother to establish whether it is *one* or *a broad spectrum of dialects*, all following a similar pattern of integrating English words for which there is no readily available equivalent in the mother tongue. In the end, they dismiss it altogether as a short-lived epiphenomenon of the broader process of re-acculturation designating the various *ad hoc* devices used "primarily among older members of this community and in cross-generational settings." None of these three sources support the hypostatization of essentially a series of linguistic accidents to the level of a common idiom or a "distinct ethnolet."

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What he presents as a "distinctive ethnolect (ethnic dialect) of Italese created . . . in Canada from the experience of Italian immigrants" (p. 168) is an unwarranted fabrication whose ultimate objective is, wittingly or unwittingly, the legitimation of a hidden political agenda.

A closer scrutiny of how immigrants from various Italian regions, not to mention villages, communicate with each other — an analysis untainted by extraneous ideological imperatives — would have revealed immediately that although, as with other ethnic minorities in North America, they normally introduce slightly modified English words into their native languages, their particular dialects do not thereby become homogenized into one common idiom.[2] Rather, they are modified by the addition of new words, without losing any of their particularity. Whereas, e.g., in Italian the word normally used for "truck" is "*autocarro*" or "*camion*," immigrants prefer to adapt the English version, rendered variously as "*trokko*" in most Calabrese dialects, "*troc*" in some of its Abruzzese versions, "*trokku*" in a few Sicilian or Sardinian ones, or simply "*truck*" by most immigrants from Northern Italy.[3]

Why all this irrelevant linguistic nitpicking? Because Harney's seemingly innocent mishandling of linguistic subtleties betrays a whole series of misreadings of "Italian" immigrant realities, which lead him to distort systematically larger social, political and cultural issues to fit, whether he meant it or not, the official ideology of the ruling Canadian elite. In a nutshell, Italese is the Italian equivalent of Spanglish, Ebonics etc., and performs exactly the same ideological function. The problem with this *imagining* of "new" languages or dialects, to use a word dear to Harney, is that the real ones take generations to develop and eventually become codified, and then only if particular groups thrive in relative isolation. Harney writes about the "time-space compression" (p. 6), but apparently does not appreciate the extent to which, by accelerating social processes, this postmodern phenomenon shrinks the time-span necessary to acculturate

2. Both Clivio and Danesi readily acknowledge "the interference of English on the idiolect of each Italian-Canadian in Toronto," i.e., the fact that "the receiving code" is always a "regional or dialectal one," rather than *one* common language which would thereby be transformed into a new common idiom. Thus, even in terms of these accounts, Harney's speculations concerning a unitary "Italese" or "Italo-Canadese" language are groundless.

3. The Clivio and the Danesi/Di Giovanni articles both use this word as an example, unaware that their rendition of "truck" as "*trocco*" only refers to *one* particular dialectal appropriation. Interstingly enough, Clivio, writing in Italian and thus linguistically more "orthodox," gives "*autocarro*" (p. 487) as the proper equivalent, while Danesi and Di Giovanni, writing in English, use the more popular synonym, "*camion*" (p. 92) — itself an import from French at the turn of the century, and a perfect example of how foreign words become permanent parts of another language during the normal process of growing and developing, without generating any new "ethnolet." The most obvious example of this state of affairs is the way ancient Hebrew, which lacked a large number of modern words for things that did not exist two millennia ago, has been modernized in today's Israel by simply importing, lock, stock and barrel, many new foreign words into the language.

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new immigrants to even less than a generation, thus effectively preventing the codification of anything like "Italese." Inextricably bound with the limited experience of specific generations of immigrants, the myriad of dialectal innovations "Italian" immigrants introduce in their daily interactions among themselves have no chance of becoming generalized, and will disappear with them. Subsequent generations are readily "Canadianized," and lose any particular linguistic idiosyncrasy they may have shared with their elders as soon as the latter pass away. The various Italese, Ebonics, Spanglish, etc. are the disingenuous inventions of ethnic pseudo-intellectuals seeking to inflate artificially a demand for their particular cultural capital, i.e., their rudimentary knowledge of both minority and majority cultures, in order to legitimate their parasitic role as privileged mediators between the two. Many of Harney's problems stem from having relied too much on these self-promoting "informants" for his data, thus falling victim to one of ethnographers' main occupational hazards.[4] As a result, he tends to overgeneralize their particular perspective and ends up systematically confusing the real immigrant experience of often inarticulate and barely literate people with the cultural constructions that multicultural pseudo-intellectuals routinely market to wrest funds and cushy administrative positions from an equally opportunistic central state bureaucracy engaged in selling an even more suspect multicultural agenda.

The Marketing of "Italianness"

Harney devotes a couple of pages to these "ethnocultural entrepreneurs" (pp. 104-5) without, however, understanding the huge methodological problems they create for his work. With the possible exception of few, relatively recent arrivals, usually better educated and more urbane, the typical post-WWII "Italian" immigrant in Toronto came from small towns that up to the time television became widely available in the mid-1960s were hardly integrated into any Italian national culture. Harney is perceptive enough to quote Ignazio Silone's *Fontamara* to

4. The ethnographers' paradox is that, while they need reliable and representative informants, the ability to determine who is reliable and representative presupposes precisely the kind of knowledge of the group being studied that the study is supposed to acquire. Thus, it is not unusual for ethnographers to take the views of part of a group as representative of the whole, in a context where the ethnographer is unaware of the group's internal stratification and cultural composition. Even classical ethnographic studies of particular communities of immigrants from Italy, such as William Foote Whyte's late 1930s study of Boston's North End, *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum*, 4th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), ran into problems with informats and was accused of misrepresenting the community. For a discussion of these problems as they relate to Whyte, see the special issue of *The Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (April 1992) devoted entirely to the topic. Surprisingly, Harney does not discuss or even mention this and other American studies of communities of immigrants from Italy which, while dealing with slightly different types of immigration experiences, nonetheless confront many of the same problems found in Toronto a couple of generations later. As a result, he makes many of the same mistakes and more.

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illustrate how in the 1930s Italian was a foreign language (and, one might add, a foreign culture) for the very people who, a couple of decades later, found their way to Toronto (p. 128). In discussing their concrete *modus vivendi*, he even acknowledges the extent to which Italian social, political and economic realities still remain foreign to them (p. 138). But, instead of becoming suspicious of the possible hidden political agendas behind the imposition of an official "Italian" ethnic designation, he waxes *ad nauseam* about the "subtle and complicated meanings in a diaspora or immigrant community" (p. 141). Aside from the fact that this emigration was always entirely *voluntary*, and thus impossible to designate as any kind of "diaspora" (although Harney, along with other postmodern anthropologists, routinely misuses and abuses the term),[5] there is no such thing as an obvious "national" Italian ethnic identity.[6] The "Italian" immigrants he has studied came to Canada from rural villages hardly touched by Italian national realities.[7] They wanted to become Canadians. They wanted to become integrated as equals within the new communities they had chosen without necessarily forfeiting

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5. Harney quotes Robin Cohen's *Global Diaspora: An Introduction* (London: University of Washington Press, 1997), which provides so broad a typology of the concept that "diaspora"' ends up referring practically to any kind of demographic displacement. If the concept can apply equally to, e.g., the centuries-old Jewish experience of persecution as well as to the migration of peasants from Italian villages, then it becomes analytically meaningless. This point had already been made by Harney's own late father, Robert F., in "L'Emigrazione Italiana e le Frontiere della Civiltà Occidentale," in his *Dalla Frontiera alle Little Italies: Gli Italiani in Canada 1800-1945* (Rome: Bonacci, 1984), p. 47: "the term 'Italia oltremare' does not describe the phenomenon as do the terms 'diaspora' for Jews . . ."

6. As Sartre showed over a generation ago, ethnic identity is always something ascribed by the "other," rather than anything freely chosen. See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, tr. by George J. Becker (New York: Schocken, 1995). "Italianness" is clearly an example of this predicament. Studies of immigrants from Italy readily recognize the extent to which these immigrants' cultural identity was thoroughly local and how it was constituted over time in response to the uninformed and homogenizing gaze of a hostile native population. See Kenneth Bagnell, *Canadese: A Portrait of the Italian Canadians* (Toronto: McMillan, 1989); and John A. Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto: Development of a National Identity, 1875-1935* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1988). This is essentially Caroline Ware's old thesis in her *Greenwitch Village 1920-1930: A Comment on American Civilisation in the Post-War Years* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1935), which Zucchi claims to refute with his own narrative. Nothing in his account, however, warrants such a conclusion.

7. This is readily acknowledged not only by Zucchi, *op. cit.*, but by practically anyone who has studied the subject. Thus, according to Robert F. Harney, "Toronto's Italian settlement can be understood best not as a Little Italy but rather as the terminal or way station for a variety of colonies serving the transatlantic networks of many small towns in Italy." See his "Toronto's Little Italy, 1885-1945," in Robert F. Harney and J. Vincenza Scarpaci, eds., *Little Italies in North America* (Toronto: The Multicultural History Socierty of Ontario, 1981), p. 43. See also Robert Perin, "Introduction" to Roberto Perin and Franc Sturio, eds., *Arrangiarsi. The Italian Immigration Experience in Canada* (Montreal: Guernica, 1989), pp. 15ff.

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their particular cultural identity — something they could not have done very readily even if they so wished. They had no intentions whatsoever of becoming "Italians" or "Italian-Canadians," i.e., members of a particular minority permanently stuck with an ethnic identity imposed on them by a distant bureaucratic apparatus in order to help legitimate the multicultural re-engineering of Canadian society by a Francophile elite which, because of a bizarre constitutional imbroglio, invariably dominates Canadian federal politics. To reify the temporary differences of a group of heterogeneous immigrants in the process of becoming integrated into a society claiming to be more than willing to accept them as equals, i.e., to translate the mythology of a particular ethnic designation into permanent cultural castes, conceals a pernicious hidden agenda of seeking to perpetuate indefinitely existing relations of domination and subordination. Under the pretense of providing "a level playing field" for groups of people allegedly susceptible to victimization, multiculturalism ends up erecting cultural barriers and complicating the already onerous process of social integration.

At one point, Harney is confronted directly with this state of affairs. As he confesses in passing: "one friend who works in a pan-Italian institution [i.e., an "ethnocultural entrepreneur"] told me that it is hard to find friends anymore who want to be simply Italian Canadians." (p. 89). As usual, however, he fails to draw the obvious conclusion that, for all practical purposes, these people have been mediatized into "Italian-Canadians" only statistically, for administrative reasons having nothing to do with their particular culture, language, religion, etc. or, more generally, with their self-image and expectations. After the book's first couple of pages, where he seems to pose the problem correctly, Harney buys into official Canadian multicultural discourse and proceeds to distort systematically the "Italian" immigrants' realities. Thus, he cannot avoid confronting "regional Italian identities" (p. 92). Instead of seeing it as fundamental and primary, however, he sees it as "emerging" (p. 50), as a *subsequent* disturbance complicating an otherwise "normal" ethnic landscape. Allegedly, within "the social space of the Canadian nation (*sic*),[8] members of the larger Italian-American community have defined a smaller moral community within which to express, adapt and defend themselves" (p. 100). What is "the larger Italian-Canadian community" other than an arbitrary administrative abstraction to designate an extremely heterogeneous group of peoples and communities? Here, the bureaucratic, multicultural elite is legitimated automatically as "the Italian-Canadian community," while ordinary immigrants in flesh-and-blood only reluctantly are even

8. When did Canada become a "nation"? Harney's confusion here is not limited only to the fact that until 1982 Canada was a *confederation* and, notwithstanding the powerful homogenizing impact of Trudeau's new "Charter of Rights and Freedoms," it remains officially a federation. He does not seem to realize that a multicultural society, in order to retain a minimum of officially-sanctioned diversity, can never achieve the kind of homogenization required for nationhood.

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acknowledged as deviant "members" having the audacity to redefine themselves in local terms. Not surprisingly, Harney cannot make anything out of this and ends up dismissing regional identities as "imaginary" constructs, eventually reducing them to mere marketing ploys for the various products from the particular regions (p. 100). These regional identities are ephemeral, but not because they are poor carbon-copies of a broader Italian national identity, as he suggests, but for precisely the opposite reason. Closer scrutiny readily reveals how, as in the case of national "Italian" identity, they are also administrative fictions.[9] This state of affairs is revealed inadvertently by another of Harney's many otherwise innocent linguistic slips.

In referring to a typical Italian region from which many of the Toronto immigrants came, Harney carelessly calls it both Abruzz*i* (e.g., pp. 128, 131, 135, 154, etc.) and Abruzz*o* (e.g., pp. 96-99, 119, 155, etc.). Such a confusion is very common, even in Italy today (which, however, is no excuse for not being consistent and sticking with either one or the other designation). What is more interesting are the socio-cultural problems it reflects. Although Article 131 of the 1948 Italian Constitution,[10] in accordance with established historical practice, officially designated the region as "Abruzzi," in 1974, primarily for administrative reasons, a law was passed (the "Legge Crescenzi") formally sanctioning the name "Abruzzo." Yet, scholars intimately familiar with local realities continue to question whether there is such a thing as a culturally homogeneous "Abruzzo."[11] Given the region's impassable mountainous topography, "Abruzzi" could never have designated much more than a rough geographic aggregation, despite the fact that at various times it functioned as a kind of "bridge-region" [*regione-ponte*] between North

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9. The partition of contemporary Italy into regions came about as an administrative expediency reflecting no pre-existing social, political or cultural realities. That regional structures never managed to totalize culturally, socially or politically the many provincial and municipal units they contain is well-known. See title V, article 114 of the Italian Constitution in *Costituzione Italiana*, with an "Introduction" of Giangiulio Ambrosini (Turin: Einaudi, 1973), pp. 30ff. See also Carlo Dionisotti, "Regioni e Letteratura," in *Storia d'Italia* (Turin: Editore Einaudi, 1977), Vol. V, pp. 1375-1395.

10. *Costituzione Italiana*, *op. cit.*, p. 34. Until the passage of the constitutional law of December 27, 1963, when they were split into two distinct regions, both "Abruzzi and Molise" were regarded as one region.

11. Sofia Boesch Gajano, "Introduzione," in Sofia Boesch Gajano and Maria Rita Berardi, *Civiltà Medioevale negli Abruzzi* (L'Aquila: Edizioni Libreria Colacchi, 1990), Vol. 1, p. 9. As Ugo Vignuzzi put it, "from the very beginning, what transpires from the documents is a 'region in the plural'." See Ugo Vignuzzi, "'Abruzzi vs Abruzzo': La Formazione di una Regione nella Storia Sociopolitica, Culturale e Linguistica," in *ibid.*, p. 418. As the same author emphasizes elsewhere, there is a strong persistence of "a polycentric, cantonal and municipal 'localism,' which often has reactivated proudly nothing less than the denomination of the ancient pre-Roman *civitas* and *gentes*." See Ugo Vignuzzi, "Gli Abruzzi e il Molise," in Francesco Bruni, ed., *L'Italiano nelle Regioni: Lingua Nazionale e Identità Regionale* (Turin: UTET, 1992), p. 595.

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and South as well as between the two coasts.[12] The very name derives from *Praetutium* and *Aprutium*, initially only one of the several Longobard settlements (around today's Teramo) established after the fall of the Roman Empire, but later encompassing the whole region. For the next several centuries, the new political arrangements practically destroyed the local economies and brought about total cultural isolation.[13] Subsequently, for purely administrative reasons, under Frederick II the whole area was designated as *Iustitieratus Aprutii*. But, shortly thereafter, in 1272, its irreducible cultural and economic heterogeneity necessitated an additional subdivision into two main parts, *citra et ultra flumen Piscariae* (the old frontier between the ducats of Spoleto and Banevento), of which, later, for the same reasons, the *ultra* part was further subdivided into *Ultra I* and *Ultra II* under Spanish rule in 1641 and officially sanctioned as such in 1807 by Bonaparte.[14] Yet, as linguists and anthropologists working in this area are increasingly coming

12. Although since Roman times the whole region was crisscrossed by a network of roads such as the *via Salaria*, the *Claudia nova* and the *Tiburtina-Valeria*, all connected by means of the *via Minucia* [see Simonetta Segenni, *Amiternum e il suo Territorio in Età Romana* (Pisa: Giardini Editore, 1985), pp. 103-113], the region was always rather inaccessible. At any rate. Rome's imperial politics and its *ius gentes* not only did not interfere with, but actually encouraged local cultural particularity. See Alain de Benoist, "The Idea of Empire," in *Telos* 98-99 (Winter 1993-94), pp. 81-98.

13. With the invasion of the Ostrogoths and the Longobards, the various settlements became totally isolated as a result of the imposition of the *Edictum Theodorici Regis*, which, following traditional Longobard practices, sanctioned the *glaudium* for anyone leaving the settlement without authorization. See Alessandro Clementi, "La Trasumanza nell'Alto Medioevo," in *Bullettino della Deputazione Abruzzese di Storia Patria*, Vol. LXXIV (1984), pp. 31-47. Only around the end of the millennium, under the Normans, did the region become reintegrated into European realities and eventually, with the foundation of the new city of L'Aquila, pave the way for the communal movement and the beginning of the Renaissance, See Alessandro Clementi, *Storia dell'Aquila* (Bari: Laterza, 1998). But even then, the particularistic character of the early communes encouraged rather than homogenized local cultures. Later, because of the inextricable connection of the local economy with the wool trade and the need of the sheep herds to have access to Southern pastures during the winter months, the enforced political isolation of the region during the Spanish domination after 1529 led once again to isolation, cultural decline and the hyper-particularism that remained even after Italian unification and until WWII.

14. During this whole period, whatever outside cultural influences there were, they were always readily assimilated to local traditions, which did not thereby lose any of their particularity. As early as the turn of the century, a journey from Rome still took two full days in good weather, often on roads negotiable only by mules (*mulattiere*). See Salvatore Mozillo, *Viaggiatori Stranieri nel Sud* (Milan: Edizioni Comunitá, 1982). See also Ferdinando Gregorovius, "Prefazione" to Vincenzo Bindi, *Monumenti Storici ed Artistici degli Abruzzi* (Naples: 1889), reprinted in Ferdinando Gregorovius, *Viaggio in Abruzzo nella Pentacoste del 1871* (Cerchio: Polla, 1987), pp. 63-88. The development of a modern infrastructure and the penetration of the mass media has translated into a systematic assault on these particularistic cultures which, however, continue to thrive. Whatever their present predicament, however, they remain the traditional frameworks of most Italian immigrants to Toronto, who left before this "modernization."

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to realize, the sharp cultural and dialectal differences these divisions ratify date even further back, to the pre-Roman times of the various Sabine and Vestine tribes,[15] which helps explain why, e.g., to this day the dialects of the various villages on either side of the Gran Sasso are practically incomprehensible to "outsiders" from neighboring towns only a few miles apart, but separated by substantial physical obstacles. The same can be said, e.g., of Friuli in the North, where the people from villages on either side of the Tagliamento River must find recourse to a third common language to communicate; or of Calabria, where 387 out of a total of 409 towns are still today on hills or mountains and, consequently, e.g., people from Catanzaro and Cosenza, on opposite sides of the Sila mountains, have no clue as to each other's or, even more, to Reggio's dialect.[16]

The inability to grasp the cultural import of subtle differences is not merely a function of Harney's understandable uneasiness with the various dialects, but of his conformist ideology, which leads him not only to accept uncritically the official multicultural definition of the Canadian socio-political landscape, but also to assume that Italy's efforts since political unification in the 1860s to achieve some sort of economic, linguistic and demographic homogenization have been successful.[17] Harney's cavalier subsumption of local cultural realities under those arbitrary national categories sanctioned by Ottawa's multicultural strategy or by Rome's centralizing policies actually contribute to complicating the "Italian" immigrants' lives by legitimating their state-sponsored "Italianization." While

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15. See Ernesto Giammarco, *Abruzzo Dialettale* (Pescara: Istituto di Studi Abbruzzesi, 1973); and Giacomo Devoto and Giovanni Giacomelli, *I Dialetti delle Regioni d'Italia* (Florence: Sansoni, 1972).

16. This is nothing peculiar to Italians. It is well-known how the Dnieper River separates the Ukraine into two radically different and hostile clusters of people and how, in Toronto as elsewhere, the extreme cases, the linguistic and socio-cultural diversity of the "Chinese" community leads to the paradoxical predicament whereby, in some families of recent immigrants, in which the two partners come from different parts of China and have only a rudimentary knowledge of English, husband and wife nonetheless must communicate in their new language, since their respective dialects are mutually impenetrable.

17. It is ironic that Harney, following "Italian" ethnocultural entrepreneurs, posits "Italianness" as an ethnic reality, precisely at a time when such a concept is coming under increasing attacks in Italy itself. During the past decade, separatist movements have sprung up not only in the North, but throughout the peninsula. See the special issue of *Telos* on "The Leagues in Italy," No. 90 (Winter 1991-92). Contrary to widespread belief, encouraged by the Italian mass media, separatism is not purely a Northern phenomenon. See the "Dossier" of *liMes*, No. 4 (1996) on "La Secessione Vista dal Sud," with articles by Paolo Morawski, "Padania Chiama Borbonia?"; Stefano Picciaredda, "'Sardigna Natzione': Un'Isola Cerca il suo Progetto"; and Giuseppe Lo Bianco, "Né Cito né Bossi: La Via Siciliana al Federalismo." Before Italy officially met the economic criteria necessary to join the EU, it was practically granted that, had the effort failed, Italy would have broken up. With the advent of European integration and economic globalization, however, the status of Italy as a nation is equally unclear, as it reduces more and more to an unnecessary bureaucratic layer between Europe and the particular regions and localities.

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obviously easier for them to "Italianize" than to "Canadianize" (which explains their hitherto largely passive reception of official multiculturalism), this policy is ultimately counterproductive in that, in the long run, it not only does not facilitate, but actually complicates intergenerational relations. Poorly "Italianized" parents, whose real culture and language remains local and hyper-particular, become increasingly distant from their inevitably "Canadianized" children, who are encouraged by the Canadian multicultural bureaucracy to relate to them not in terms of their traditional dialects, traditions and customs, but through yet a third cultural form, largely foreign to both. Harney seems to sense some of the problems engendered by this paradoxical predicament (pp. 158ff.) and even describes how in fact Italianization — or what he pompously calls the "construction" and "imagining" of "Italianness" as yet another cultural commodity in the Canadian multicultural supermarket — effectively separates them from their children by contributing to the obliteration of their traditional culture (pp. 168ff.). However, instead of inquiring into the long-range implications of this state-sponsored project of cultural re-engineering, he abruptly ends his analysis with a Panglossian observation concerning how comfortable were the children of these immigrants (i.e., his "ethnocultural entrepreneur" informants) in "negotiating between Canadian cultural expectations and Italianità" (p. 173).

The Multicultural Obliteration of Cultural Particularity

Harney's failure to inquire into the implication of Italianization as an instance of what some scholars have called "the colonization of the lifeworld"[18] leads him to ignore altogether the extent to which this administrative venture into cultural mediatization contributes to *de facto* cultural disintegration, i.e., how it obstructs the generational reproduction of communities of productive autonomous individuals rooted in concrete traditional, yet dynamic settings. Instead of becoming gradually and organically Canadianized into the broader socio-cultural mainstream of the various local communities in which they now live, while privately retaining their traditional cultural identity (in the way generations of immigrants from the most diverse backgrounds have, for better or worse, successfully managed to "Americanize" in the US) multiculturalism derails this process by encouraging immigrants to become "Italianized," "Ukranianized," or, in the most extreme case, "Sinicized" (since China, along with India, surely must rate among the world's

18. See, e.g., Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 2, "Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason," tr. by Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987). Since Habermas sees traditions as terminally obliterated by modernity, his objective is to figure out how to bring about an effective rationalization of this lifeworld. This rationalization is essential because, along with all modernists, he sees the lingering of these archaic features as the main source of contemporary social dysfunctions. For a more critical analysis of the problems engendered by the colonization of the life-world, see Finn Bowrings, "A Lifeworld without a Subject: Habermas and the Pathologies of Modernity," in *Telos* 106 (Winter 1996), pp. 77ff.

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most culturally heterogeneous countries). In further complicating the already extremely complex process of acculturation by interjecting a third artificial cultural dimension, multiculturalism tends to deprive the children of immigrants of traditional sources of identity and to transform them into passive clients increasingly dependent on the state and the mass media for values and beliefs neither can provide. As the apparently already forgotten experiences of forced acculturation in Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union or, to a lesser extent, fascist Italy and most liberal-democratic welfare societies, the state and the culture industry can only *indoctrinate* and *manipulate*. They do not and cannot constitute culture and, *ipso facto*, educate responsible and autonomous individuals.[19] Multicultural homogenization is thus a prelude to a gradual cultural disintegration, and subsequent massive administrative measures to contain it: precisely the kind of predicament necessitating the further empowerment of the Ottawa bureaucracy to turn Canada, despite its longstanding tradition as a free society, into another bureaucratic-centralist regime. A necessary precondition for this politically-motivated exercise in cultural re-engineering, however, is the delegitimation of traditional cultural forms — a maneuver Harney contributes to, by means of highly idiosyncratic translations.

For *prima facie* mysterious reasons, Harney has a problem translating into English the term "*paese,*" the standard name for the Italian villages from which the overwhelming majority of these "Italian" immigrants originate. Sometimes, he translates *paesi* as "villages," at other times he refers to them as "towns," both perfectly acceptable renditions. But, when discussing cultural matters, he suddenly renders them as "agro-towns" (pp. 46, 127, 134, etc.) — a word which appears in no standard English dictionary.[20] Why resort to such a linguistic barbarity when "village" is more than adequate? The ideological subtext becomes clear through a careful comparison of these concepts. By occluding the archaic and traditional connotations inextricably associated with the "*paese*" or the "village," the deployment

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19. For an analysis of the pedagogical and cultural problems engendered by educational policies predicated on statist objectives, see Paul Piccone, "The End of Public Education?" in *Telos* 111 ((Spring 1998), pp. 123-138.

20. The only other place this word seems to have been used is in a hyper-economistic/feminist history of postwar Italian immigrants to Toronto, where real people appear only as embodiments of economic or feminist categories (workers, proletarians, males, females, peasants, etc.) unfolding through time according to an inexorable capitalist logic. See Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People. Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1992), p. 9. Not by accident, the story ends abruptly with the 1960-61 "immigrant strikes" in the Toronto construction industry and, presumably, with the immigrants finally acquiring the proper class consciousness. Yet, when all is said and done, even the author has to admit grudgingly that the history of these immigrants cannot be subsumed within currently fashionable neo-Marxist victimological historiography (pp. 200-201). Many of the subcontractors created by the construction industry's attempt to cut labor costs and prevent unionization (pp. 157ff.) did fail, but many more succeeded, contributing considerably to the immigrants' rapid upward social mobility during the next couple of decades.

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of the word "agro-town" shifts the focus to an industrial and commercial reality that has been gradually marginalizing and instrumentalizing local cultures.

Sure enough, immediately after introducing "agro-towns," Harney writes that attachment to local culture (which he reduces disparagingly to "*campanilismo*" — an untranslatable term originally deployed by Ferdinand de Saussure to designate local linguistic phenomena, but more recently used to denigrate local cultural particularity as provincialism, ethnocentrism and bigotry) is used by "Italian immigrants . . . as an ideological construct to interpret their lives, but in daily activities a more pragmatic, subtle, and inclusive way of thinking operates" (p. 128). The implication is clear: the "cash-nexus" is real, but values, identity, memory and all else that actually goes into constituting concrete cultural identity are "ideological constructs," i.e., mere superstructural embellishments. Such a crude, covert, vulgar-Marxist perspective prevents Harney from appreciating how dynamic and susceptible to hermeneutic reelaboration are the living traditions these people brought with them, which explains their extraordinarily successful integration into Canadian society, despite all multicultural mediatizing efforts by the government, "ethnocultural entrepreneurs," and naive ethnologists. Although Harney spends several pages illustrating the centrality of traditional local cultures to these people's lives (pp. 129ff.), he ultimately reduces them to mere "points on a map of Italianness" (p. 142).[21] But there is absolutely nothing purely "Italian" about this. It is a general phenomenon typical of practically all cultures — especially those of rural immigrants not only from Europe, but elsewhere as well. All of these immigrants are terminally rooted in the particular cultures of their native villages. Exactly the same can be said of all ethnic aggregations in Toronto. They all operate roughly along similar parameters. This raises the question as to why study them as "Italians," which they are not, rather than as particular groups totalized by local cultures.

This systematic occlusion of any *lebensweltliche* cultural particularity, already exemplified by the book's misleading title, is further reinforced by the front cover illustration. It depicts two presumably Italian-Canadian pre-teens, whose faces are fashionably painted with the red, white and green colors of the Italian flag on the occasion of the Italian national soccer team's winning of the 1982 World Cup. Far from capturing any real particularity, the depiction of "Italian" specificity through one of the most pedestrian ways of expressing the exuberance of fans everywhere in North America, if not the world, is tantamount to serializing it, thus erasing anything truly particular to it. Such a conventional

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21. Had he paid more attention to comparable American literature on the subject, by consulting, e.g., Herbert J. Gans' study of Boston's West End, *The Urban Villagers* (New York: The Free Press, 1965), emphasizing the continuing importance of the local culture of rural Italian villages in the life of immigrants, Harney may have been a little more careful before dismissing these cultures' lingering relevance. The "map" has been around only a little more than a century, while the various "points" have roots thousands of years old.

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iconographic strategy is another instance of multicultural homogenization which, in recognizing particularity only as a set of irrelevant folkloristic features, simultaneously homogenizes all administratively-sanctioned groups as instances of the same general phenomenon.

While the Italian national soccer team's success in the 1982 World Cup may have been a cathartic experience for "Italian" immigrants in Toronto, it was primarily a media event no different from the much bigger celebration of the Blue Jay's winning the World Series a decade latter or those that routinely take place in midwestern American cities such as Denver, Green Bay or Chicago after local teams win the Superbowl. Harney hypostatizes the celebration following the 1982 World Cup victory as "the symbolic transition event that signified a constellation of complex conditions leading to changing meanings associated with Italy and Italians in Toronto's public life" (p. 158). The book goes on to drivel inconclusively for 17 pages about how to discover "*Italianità*" and how to market Italian authenticity (p. 173), without actually explaining what "constellation of complex conditions" have led to what "changed meanings" and why. Somehow, according to Harney, the fortuitous success in 1982 of Italy's exceptionally boring national soccer team in lulling opponents to sleep after gaining the advantage had the opposite effect in Toronto of energizing the Italian community. From then on, this community allegedly shed its criminal and peasant identity, modernized, built community centers, even generated its own ethno-feminist gangs (pp. 165-6), and rode happily into the Canadian sunset.

This is not exactly what has taken place.[22] The success of "Italian" immigrants in Toronto, along with that of all other immigrant groups, has been largely a function of the explosive growth of the Canadian economy and, despite all attempts to "Italianize" them, these immigrants' retention of traditional local cultures, along with their tight family, kinship and community structure, while also becoming integral parts of the various culturally-heterogeous communities in which they live. Far from signaling their multicultural apotheosis, the "modernization" of these immigrants — their effective Italianization — may very well mean the beginning of the end of a particular socio-cultural reality and the severance of intergenerational continuity, aided, first and foremost, by outspoken "ethnocultural entrepreneurs," whose economic interests, social status and corporate identity are now inextricably tied to the successful marketing of an "Italianness" the Italian government is actively sponsoring. Harney does not question what

22. If there ever was a particularly cathartic event which totalized post-WWII "Italian" immigrants into any kind of monolithic community, it probably was the 1976 earthquake in Northern Italy. Coinciding as it did with a telethon to help finance the construction of a retirement home, Villa Colombo, it made the native "Old Stock" Toronto population suddenly aware of the potential financial and political clout of the "Italian" community. Once again, community identity was something ascribed by the other's perception. For a colorful account of this event and what led to it, see Bagnell, *op. cit.*, pp. 212ff.

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business a foreign government as corrupt and bankrupt as the Italian one may have in interfering in Canada's culture — something that began with the late 19th century Italian government's colonial dreams and continued in the 1920s with the imperialist aspirations of the fascist regime.[23] This may have to do with another one of the book's main flaws: the failure to place events within a proper historical and political context. Once again, this is best illustrated by two otherwise relatively trivial linguistic blunders.

Contextualizing "Italian" Immigration

Nowhere in his book does Harney attempt to contextualize the post-WWII migration of Italians to Toronto within the history of Italian emigration in general, or to see it as a particular instance of broader demographic movements. A more careful reading of the post-WWII migration of Italians to Toronto would have shown that it cannot be read as a *singular* phenomenon. Rather, it is broken into two radically different events, separated not by an irrelevant and fortuitous soccer victory, but by the West European "economic miracle" in the 1960s. The people who came to Toronto in the 1950s and early 1960s, before Italy became an advanced industrial society (the overwhelming majority of "Italian" immigrants in Toronto), were mostly poor, from rural settings, with only a rudimentary education, willing to take manual jobs, and interested primarily in starting a new life in a new country: they wanted to become Canadians (whatever that may have meant), fully integrated into Toronto's mainstream, rather than part of an Italian minority. Those who came later (in much smaller numbers) were generally from urban centers, better educated, economically better off than earlier immigrants, and interested primarily in ethnocultural entrepreneurial opportunities. They could care less about "Canadianizing" and were thus particularly receptive to any kind of multicultural mediatization within which they could cash in their privileged knowledge of "Italian" national culture.[24] Harney acknowledges that "ethnocultural entrepreneurs have attempted to capitalize on the opportunity to change the traditional symbolic order and invest it with new meaning, responsibility, and power" (p. 105). He has no understanding, however, of what this really means. His main methodological problem is that, instead of unpacking the implications of this *de facto* cultural imperialism, he takes the easy way out and, far from being critical and exposing their systematic distortions of the "Italian" immigration experience, he relies almost entirely on this much more accessible and literate second wave of

23. See Zucchi, *op. cit.*, Ch. 7 "The Fascist Period," pp. 165-192.

24. Bagnell documents the tribulations of this second wave of immigrants, whose rootlessness has caused them even more socio-psychological disruptions than has been the case with the first wave which, for the most part, adopted well to their new environment after the initial shock of dislocation. See Bagnell, *op. cit.*, Ch. 12, "Home is Where the Heart is — But Where is the Hearth?" pp. 239-265.

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imports (or on the sons and daughters of the first wave of immigrants) for most of his information. Thus, the book is a highly one-sided ideological manifesto of these people, reflecting their self-serving misreading of Canadian realities, while remaining altogether oblivious to the broader forces that have made today's Toronto what it is.

That Harney has paid little attention to pre-WWII Italian immigration either to Canada or elsewhere in the world is betrayed by his unsupported claim that immigrants who return to Italy are the object of scorn by those who remained behind. He even thinks that there is a particular term, "*vu torna*," to refer to these people in a disparaging way (p. 139). First of all, "*vu torna*" is a highly idiosyncratic expression used in the way he describes it only by a very limited number of people from a particular set of villages. Secondly, before WWII, immigration was not always a one-way journey, and many, if not most immigrants, usually came across the Atlantic only for a short while, to earn some money to help them improve their position in their native village by, e.g., buying a piece of land or a house after they returned.[25] The extremely harsh conditions of pre-WWI emigration made it desirable for immigrants to go back home after having accumulated a little money, so there was absolutely no stigma attached with the practice. The radically changed context of post-WWII or, more specifically, prosperous post-1960 Canadian society, made all the difference in the world and even though some immigrants went back, the number is insignificant when compared with earlier figures. Had Harney bothered to familiarize himself with these realities, he might have been able to ascertain the real meaning of once common, but today hardly ever used expressions such as "*fare l'America*," which he mistranslates carelessly as "journey to America" (p. 17). Had he consulted a few of the older immigrants and a few less ethnocultural entrepreneurs, he would have discovered that this archaic phrase, which became popular toward the end of the 19th century and remained in common use up to the early 1960s, means "to make one's fortune," often to enjoy it back in one's native land — an imagery associated

25. Thus Zucchi reports that between one third to one half of all immigrants regularly went back. See Zucchi, *op. cit.*, p. 14. The changed pattern of immigration and repatriation changed drastically after WWII, as a result of a prosperous Canadian economy. What was crucial in making the decision of whether to stay or return was often the possibility of leading a better life abroad. When, after WWII, the answer became rather obvious, the rate of returns dropped drastically. For vivid evaluations of such prospects, compare, e.g., the published correspondence of immigrants of the pre-WWI era and those that came after WWII. Francesco Lussana, *Lettere di Illetterati. Note di Psicologia Sociale* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1913); and Emiliano Giancristofaro, *Cara Moglie. Lettere a Casa di Emigranti Abruzzesi* (Lanciano: Rocco Carabba, 1984). The presence of a high percentage of such returnees in the various villages can be corroborated by studying violent crime statistics for, e.g., a region such as Abruzzi at the turn of the century, where practically half of the recorded crimes were committed by ex-emigrants. The ex-emigrants' identity is betrayed by the weapons used: while the knife was the usual weapon of those who never left, the ex-emigrants almost invariably used revolvers acquired in their stay abroad.

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with emigration in Mediterranean countries ever since the early days of the Spanish *conquista* and the search for El Dorado.[26]

The point is that, although emigration from Italy was almost invariably triggered by dire poverty, more recently, after Italian economic conditions improved drastically, it has been encouraged by the promise of better opportunities. This makes a considerable difference. To homogenize all waves of emigrations under a common designation often occludes what is probably most relevant about them: their backgrounds, expectations, outlooks and concrete options. In Harney's case, he ends up missing what allowed the first wave of post-WWII "Italian" immigrants to Toronto not only to survive within an unavoidably hostile environment, but eventually to succeed beyond all expectations, while at the same time making them vulnerable to cultural manipulation by various elites in alliance with most of the second wave. Although he mentions it, Harney fails to realize the full implications of this artificial "Italianization" as part and parcel of a well-orchestrated political agenda meant to mediatize and Balkanize, along with other "nationalized" ethnic minorities, a substantial part of the population — people whose ancestral roots are other than those of the two privileged "races,"[27] the French and the English (each constituting about one third of the Canadian population) — into multicultural polities in order to carry out, through administrative means, a massive project of social and constitutional engineering. Harney's redescription of the experience of *immigrants from Italy* (rather than Italian immigrants) provides an appropriate academic apology for such policies. When all is said and done, "being Italian in Toronto" means either being a stray tourist or a para-professional cultural *apparatchik* of Italian origin (or, to use Harney's term, an ethnocultural entrepreneur) trying to cash in an otherwise unmarketable ethnic identity. As for the overwhelming majority of those "Italian" immigrants who came between the end of WWII and the late 1960s, they are all wannabe Canadians.

Alice in Wonderland: Being "Italian" in Toronto

In Harney's narrative, the ghettoization of the first generation of post-WWII immigrants within their quaint ethnic context implicitly legitimates the federal and

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26. Since completing the manuscript, Harney must have stumbled upon some of these immigrants or consulted some of the existing literature. Thus, in his "Forward" to Virginia Williams Ariemma's *The Story of Villa Charities. A Quarter Century of Community Development by Italian Canadians in Greater Metropolitan Toronto. 1971-1996* (Toronto: Villa Charities, inc., 1997), p. xiv, he renders it as "To make a better life for themselves and their families." While closer to the mark, it still misses the exagerated expectations prefigured by its real meaning: "to make one's fortune." At any rate, other immigration historians never had any trouble translating the expression correctly. See Zucchi, *op. cit.*, pp. 14 and 193.

27. "Races" is the term used to refer to the French and English populations in the original constitutional document, the 1867 British North America Act. See *The Constitution Acts 1867 to 1982* (Ottawa: Ministry of Supply and Services, 1966).

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provincial policies that have brought Canada to the brink of political disintegration. It is no accident that the constitutional fiascos of Charlottetown and Meech Lake are mentioned only in passing (pp. 36 and 91), while Trudeau's policies are described only ceremoniously (pp. 57 and 105). There is mention of the "Third Force," i.e., ethnic Canadians other than those of French and English descent (pp. 36 and 105), but, as usual, Harney draws the wrong conclusions. It does not occur to him to ask obvious questions, such as why, despite the fact that Trudeau's multicultural strategy is part and parcel of a constitutional maneuver to perpetuate the "myth of the Canadian nation as composed of two founding peoples, English and French" (p. 105), which marginalizes natives and "the Third Force" as second rate citizens or multicultural residues, by and large this Third Force has accepted such a patently absurd institutional arrangement that Trudeau managed to impose on a reluctant polity — first and foremost on the Quebeckers.[28] If Canada did in fact need a new Constitution to reflect changed socio-cultural realities in the second half of the 20th century, why draft it in such a way as to guarantee an obsolete 19th century vision of Canada, when the country was divided into Upper and Lower Canada, the West was hardly populated, native populations were still regarded as little more than bothersome savages, and there were very few immigrants with ancestry other than French and English? Even more puzzling, why did the Third Force accept this state of affairs which, along with the native populations, relegated them to mere "multicultural" afterthoughts?

Harney does not see the extent to which, far from providing any meaningful opposition to this undemocratic constitutional fraud[29] (as he hints), erthnocultural entrepreneurs (whose interests are inextricably tied to multiculturalism) have been its most effective agents by successfully rallying the Toronto "Italian" and other "ethnic" communities behind it. Why should "Italian" immigrants accept a constitutional arrangement that predicates their Canadianization on a permanent artificial "ethnicization"? By uncritically accepting the Italianization of these immigrants, Harney distorts the fundamental fact that this particular generation of immigrants not only did not have any particular national identity, but, for all practical purposes, left behind whatever "Italianness" they had when they chose to come to Canada. They really wanted to become Canadians in the same sense that their friends and relatives who emigrated to, e.g., the US and Australia, only wanted to become Americans and Australians. Despite the fact that today

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28. See Kenneth McDonald, "The French Revolution in Canada," in *Chronicles* (April 1998), pp. 17-20; William D. Gairdner, *Constitutional Crack-up: Canada and the Coming Show-down with Quebec* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1994); Peter Brimelow, *The Patriot Game: Canada and the Canadian Question Revisited* (Toronto: Key Porter, 1986); and Paul Piccone, "Secession and Reform in Canada," in *Telos* 106 (Winter 1996), pp. 15-63.

29. For an excellent account of Canadian constitutional history, see Peter H. Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey: Can Canadians Become a Sovereign People?* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

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Canadian identity is up for grabs and that even its most sympathetic critics see it as little more than a mild embarrassment,[30] along with all other immigrants to Toronto, those who came from Italy still wanted to be Canadian. Whether Canada eventually manages to reconfigure itself as what Gwyn calls "Canada Two," i.e., a community of communities along the lines originally laid out by Joe Clark in his debate with Trudeau;[31] as some version of "The Rest of Canada," i.e., a Canada without Quebec; or simply as "The Republic of Ontario" (since, in terms of culture, language, economic infrastructure, etc., Ontario is obviously much closer to upstate New York or Michigan than to Quebec or even Newfoundland and B.C.) within a broader North American confederation, the progeny of these "Italian" immigrants sooner or later will begin to regard the multicultural imbroglio as a desperate attempt to institutionalize within a modern welfare state the old Canadian "myth of the two founding nations" and may help to undo what has been called "Trudeau's Revolution."[32] Any such a development would also entail the end of the multicultural experiment, as well as the demise of the ethnocultural entrepreneurs' cultural hegemony within the "Italian" immigrant community.

This will not be an easy task. As with the difficulties encountered in dismantling affirmative action and other dubious government policies in the US, multiculturalism in Canada is an institutional reality whose fate is tied to that of thousands of ethnocultural entrepreneurs entrusted with managing the "Italian" and other ethnic plantations.[33] As the designated spokesmen of what both the provincial and the Ottawa governments officially designate as an integral ethnic community, these ethnocultural entrepreneurs are vocal, articulate and literate. They will not be outmaneuvered politically by aging, largely apolitical and generally satisfied immigrants for whom speaking English still requires some effort, or by their sons and daughters who, if not themselves ethnocultural entrepreneurs, are so well assimilated into broader Canadian realities that they cannot be bothered with what for them is merely a marginal curiosity. Only if they were to be mobilized by the advocates of "English Canada" — another short-sighted political aggregation that so far has managed to alienate the Third Force by linking anti-Quebec resentment with anti-immigrant sentiments — on the basis of the kind of traditional values they share and in opposition to the general nihilism and cultural disintegration associated with multicultural homogenization could there be a political debate on this subject, eventually paving the way for a rectification

30. See Richard Gwyn, *Nationalism without Walls: The Unbearable Lightness of Being Canadian* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1995), pp. 240ff.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 9 and 23ff.

32. Kenneth McDonald, *His Pride, Our Fall: Recovering from the Trudeau Revolution* (Toronto: Key Porter, 1995)

33. This is but another instance of what Gouldner described as the zoo-keeper's predicament in his critique of Howard Becker. See Alvin W. Gouldner, "The Sociologist as a Partisan: Sociology and the Welfare State," in his *For Sociology. Renewal and Critique in Sociological Theory* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 27-68.

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of the Third Force's current political "false consciousness."

Harney describes how the various functionaries of state-supported institutions of multiculturalism resent the local "subethnic loyalties" of most of the people they allegedly serve (p. 123), and quotes the colorful ravings of one of these minor functionaries against all "parochial" or local identities (p. 70). Yet, to the extent that he deploys a crude utilitarian concept of culture as "an object to be marketed and sold" (p. 72), Harney misses not only the dynamics of premodern cultural relations actually structuring the lives of the first wave of "Italian" immigrants, but also the futility and counterproductive character of both the ethnocultural entrepreneurs' and the federal multiculturalists' mediatizing efforts. Thus, he cannot appreciate the contradictory nature of even those architecturally and organizationally sound projects he describes in detail, such as Villa Colombo, Columbus Centre and Casa D'Abruzzo — institutions whose ethnic character is increasingly becoming limited purely to their names. This is because, although he cites Marcel Mauss' classic work on the subject,[34] he misunderstands the function of the "gift" in non-capitalist cultures, not only as an alternative mode of exchange, but also as an integral part of a system of production and reproduction of social relations and cultural identities (pp. 39-51).

By reducing the function of the gift in traditional communities merely to a special "informal" case of standard contractual transactions — he never tires of emphasizing the implicit symmetry of gift-giving — Harney sees "Italian" immigrants' efforts to build community centers as exercises in crass self-promotion within a rapidly re-stratifying "Italian" ethnic community. But "gift" and capitalist economies are fundamentally incompatible. They can coexist only if the first obtains within a tightly-knit homogeneous community, such as those of the people from a particular town bound by kinship, friendship and common traditions, and the second within the broader socio-economic setting of which these communities are integral parts. It is impossible to establish economic exchanges based on gift relations within an individualist-capitalist context without doing precisely what Harney does, i.e., reducing the first to the second. In this case, however, gift relations no longer make sense. The attempt to transpose community relations typical of the *local* cultures of "Italian" immigrants in Toronto (gift relations) to the level of a *national* Italian framework (capitalist relations) is a perfect example of this confusion.

In "normalizing" the various projects to build ethnic community centers in Toronto within government multicultural guidelines, Harney assumes the ethnic identities and community structures being negotiated in the process to remain the same throughout. For reasons not immediately obvious, these immigrants with *local* cultural identities are to contribute their hard-earned money for essentially

34. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, tr. by W. D. Halls (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990). For a full discussion of the cultural and political implications of this work, see John Milbank, "The Politics of Time: Community, Gift and Liturgy," in this issue of *Telos*.

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welfare institutions ordinarily financed with the taxes they already have paid the government, in order to receive "customized" services which, however, turn out to be predicated on a foreign *national* Italian culture not substantially different from those provided by the state (predicated on another equally foreign culture, this time Canadian). Since what this process is based on is not "*being* Italian," but "*becoming* Italian" in a context where actual socio-cultural dynamics inexorably drift in a different direction, i.e., "becoming Canadian," there is something tragic in the whole project. What will happen in a few years from now, when the generations of "Italian" immigrants who came to Canada in the 1950s and early 1960s passes away, leaving in their place their thoroughly Canadianized offspring whose relation to "Italianness" is not qualitatively different from their relation to, e.g., Mongolianness? Inevitably, these beautiful community centers will lose whatever they may still have of Italian pseudo-ethnicity and will gradually turn into other run-of-the-mill welfare institutions managed by the appropriate government administrations.[35] The only difference being that those "Italians" who helped construct them will *de facto* have been taxed twice.

Harney's contribution to this multicultural con-game is that of an unwitting accomplice. In occluding the real social dynamics of the Toronto immigration experience, he legitimates the pathologies of present policies and practices, unaware of their fragility, historicity and self-destructive nature. Even otherwise laudable projects carried out in such an efficient and seemingly flawless fashion, such as the building of Villa Colombo or Casa d'Abruzzo, already betray the extent to which the project of multicultural homogenization spells the beginning of the end of cultural particularity among "Italian" immigrants in Toronto. Harney reports the initial, well-grounded objections to these projects by the people who eventually financed them (p. 65), but he summarily dismisses them as anachronistic disturbances in the "imagining" of a new Italian identity. Real cultural particularity, however, cannot be invented. When the attempt is made, it turns out to be precisely what Harney thinks it is: another commodity to be bought and sold in the marketplace, having nothing to do with personal beliefs, values and identity. The belated acceptance of rest-homes within traditional communities already signals the beginning of the collapse of the extended traditional family structure, where culture is not learned primarily in community centers or in schools, but through intergenerational interaction and liturgical practices. With old folks in rest-homes, cultural particularity ends up in the attic. Now they can

35. This is the unavoidable result of demographic flows. With immigration from Italy rapidly grinding to a halt, the first wave of post-WWII immigrants beginning to pass away, and their sons and daughters intermarrying or "Canadianizing," the pool of people for whom these institutions were originally intended is in the process of disappearing. This predicament is implicitly acknowledged by Virginia Williams-Ariemma in her history of Villa Charities, whose final chapter "Domani (Tomorrow)" already documents the rapid fading of any pretense to serve a particular "Italian" community, in favor of new, ethnically-heterogeneous communities. See Williams-Ariemma, *op. cit.*, pp. 222-223.

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only collect the dust raised by anthropologists busy apologizing for the government's latest policies, in order to earn the next research grant to study the inevitable cultural disintegration. The warehousing of the old in rest homes — especially in situations where it is avoidable — is part and parcel of a society of abstract individuals, serial monogamy, nihilism and "imagined or constructed" ethnic identities. Nothing could be more anathema to today's "Italian" immigrants in Toronto. The spotless upkeep of the facilities, the tasteful design and the sensitive and friendly staff can never make up for the eschatological squalor these people, especially women whose entire life has been family-centered, often experience in the new institutional social setting.[36]

Traditional vs. Post-Vatican II Catholicism

Similar confusions surface in Harney's treatment of the role of the Catholic Church in these immigrant communities (pp. 143-156). Following other immigration historians before him, Harney focuses on the unavoidable conflicts bound to arise in relations between newly arrived immigrants and an established Catholic Church geared to serve an altogether different population.[37] He seems dismayed by the apparent conflict between *popular* and *formal* religion — a state of affairs that has characterized the Catholic Church from the very beginning and that, to a

36. It is ironic that the main mural in Villa Colombo, one of Toronto's best "Italian" nursing-homes, in attempting to capture Italian particularity, ends up depicting an industrial and pre-industrial fragmentariness equally applicable or inapplicable to all immigrants practically anywhere — a fragmentariness immediately betraying the standpoint of a manipulative, external perspective concerned more with classifying and administering than with meaning and transcendence. In so doing, the mural effectively manages, *malgré lui*, to convey the tragedy of the "Italianization" of the allegedly passive immigrants: a *bricolage* of administratively-configured experiential contingencies relatively irrelevant to the lives of the real people who have lived with them. The scattered contraposition of various industrial images, stereotypical monuments and otherwise mundane icons aggregated to constitute the immigrants' self-identity, fails altogether to capture the centrality of family life, close friendship, traditional identities and eschatological visions which held them together through thick and thin in the hopes of making a better life, if not for themselves, at least for their children. Thus, despite its sponsors' mediatizating objectives, the mural's crude *Dinglichkeit* successfully conveys a sense of fragmentariness, bureaucratic processing, commercialism and ontological futility — the very essence of administrative multicultural Italianization. Suspiciously reminiscent of socialist-realist art, the mural's haphazard *collage* fails altogether in provideng the kind of identification and pride still triggered by the various icons and statues of "saints and madonnas" or the depictions of particular native village scenes decorating "Italian" immigrants' homes and local clubs.

37. Both Zucchi, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-140; and Iacovetta, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-142. Since both narratives stop well before the Vatican II reforms were introduced, their lack of attention to the particular doctrinal content of the immigrants' Catholicism does not result in major distortions. Yet, their constant association of this particularism with various popular superstitious practices betrays a modernist bias dismissing it all as so many pre-modern pathologies. Thus, the socio-cultural impact of religion on these people's life is systematically de-emphasized.

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great extent, explains its extraordinary institutional longevity.[38] Having already failed to contextualize the "Italian" immigrant experience within Canadian political realities, it is not surprising that he also fails to relate this experience to the even more consequential crisis of the Catholic Church and the way it has complicated the lives and identity of traditional Catholics who came of age before Vatican II — most of the "Italian" immigrants he deals with. Harney writes about "the creation . . . of Italian-Canadian Catholicism," and discusses it as merely another aspect of the "imagining and constructing" of Italianness. As in the case of "Italian" ethnic identity, however, this "Italian-Canadian Catholicism" is, at best, an administrative fiction superimposed on the idiosyncratic traditional Catholicism of the various parishes trying to coexist with the modernist, post-Vatican II Catholicism of the central bureaucracy. Harney describes some of the tribulations particular immigrant groups have experienced in their dealings with the Church hierarchy, but does not understand their implications and, as usual, trivializes them as so many folkloristic "happenings" — the anthropological equivalents of various vignettes in a Fellini movie. Thus, he misses the extent to which this "new and improved" Catholicism is not only no longer the most important mechanism of social integration within local communities of "Italian" immigrants, but in many cases has become another obstacle to intergenerational continuity and the smooth adaptation of the old ways within the new social realities.[39]

While Vatican II was not itself a "revolutionary event," in that the sixteen documents it produced essentially reaffirmed traditional Catholic doctrine,[40] it was interpreted by modernist Catholics as practically a new Protestant Reformation, simultaneously a rationalization and a de-mythologization allegedly necessary to market Catholic doctrine among "modern" believers. What it meant for traditional Catholics and what Harney mockingly calls their "saints and madonnas"

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38. The distinction of *popular* and *formal* Catholicism has nothing to do with the elitist modernist claim, according to which, as Anne Roche Muggeridge puts it, "only a chosen few can reach their higher development of religious belief and that therefore the kindest thing to do is to free the non-intellectual masses from the most onerous restraints of religion . . . and leave them in peace." This "Gnostic separation of the believing community into *perfecti* and *auditores* is the oldest Christian heresy." See Anne Roche Muggeridge, *The Desolate City: Revolution in the Catholic Church* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), p. 35. Rather, it has to do with another "fundamental dualism" which, according to Schmitt, "has dominated the world since the beginning of Christianity," i.e., that between the visible and the invisible Church. See Carl Schmitt, *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*, tr. by G. L. Ulmen (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1996), pp. 51-53.

39. As Peter McMylor and Maria Vorozhishcheva argue in "The Displacement of the Liturgical in the Formation of Modernity," in this issue of *Telos*, the immanentization of the otherworldly dimension typical of all modernizations and "*aggiornamenti*" eliminates all foundations for beliefs and worldviews, and plunges "civil society" into a crisis impossible to overcome in its own terms. Such a crisis, however, has hardly been felt in the rural pre-modern communities most "Italian" immigrants have sought to recreate in Canada.

40. Muggeridge, *The Desolate City*, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

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was that "the return of the liturgy . . . to local control . . . greatly enhance[d] the power of national episcopal conferences."[41] Instead of constituting an "updating" (*aggiornamento*) of the Church, it actually empowered a modernist middle-level bureaucracy openly intolerant of what it perceives as "pagan encrustations" within local parish cults incompatible with a modernist understanding of formal doctrine and the liturgical framework that the traditional parishes managed to provide well into the 20th century. Under the pretense of loosening dogma and nationalizing liturgical practices, this recoding of Catholic doctrine not only obliterated the traditional liturgical framework, thus turning "faith" from a participatory communal practice into a terminally irrational act, but it also eroded the free space local parishes had enjoyed historically in celebrating their beliefs and constituting local communities.

The secret of Catholicism lies precisely in its ability over the centuries to totalize the myriad of extremely diverse local parishes within which particular communities could articulate their cultural identity. In other words, ever since the High Middle Ages, it always operated within a *federal*, rather than a *national* framework. In empowering the national episcopal conferences, Vatican II meant, in political terms, a shift from *de facto* heterogeneous federalism to a homogenizing nationalism, precisely at a time when globalization was rendering irrelevant whatever autonomy national branches may still have enjoyed. The *local* autonomy guaranteed by the centralized hierarchy thus paved the way for national homogeneity.[42] Such a shift has had devastating consequences for the traditional Catholicism of "Italian" immigrants accustomed to every little town having its

41. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

42. In a belated effort at damage control, the latest papal encyclical, *Fides et Ratio*, attempts to erase this gap at a time when the covertly modernist aspirations that generated Vatican II are, for all practical purposes, exhausted. While the secular academic world Vatican II originally sought to accommodate has long since plunged into a hopeless relativism legitimating all forms of irrationalism, the post-Vatican II middle-level Catholic bureaucracy has belatedly discovered the illusory comforts of modernism. Although *Fides et Ratio* prefigures a regrounding of the Catholic faith around the rational defense of a dogmatic core, and thus implicitly challenges the covert relativism of Vatican II, it does not succeed in rejecting its one-dimensional rationalist assumptions and its effective effacement of the particular modes of articulation of the liturgical dimension carried out under the pretense of cleansing the traditional allegorical iconography. As such, it is of no real help in undoing the institutional damage precipitated by Vatican II. Consequently, today Catholicism finds itself in the contradictory predicament of being awash in a sea of neo-pagan relativism, while simultaneously rejecting the iconographic idiosyncrases of traditional parishes — the institutions which for centuries had successfully mediated between the Church's universalism and various communities' cultural particularity. See John Paul II, "*Fides et Ratio*," in *Origins*, Publication of the US Bishops Conference (Washington, DC, October 22, 1998), pp. 318-348. For a colorful journalistic account of the kind of mad modernist relativism, which has effectively displaced the pre-modern particularism of traditional parishes, see Donna Steichen, *Ungodly Rage: The Hidden Face of Catholic Feminism* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991).

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saint protector, and every parish organized around a particular church, within which most of the social life of the community rotated. These centuries-old customs are the ones "Italian" immigrants have attempted to recreated everywhere in the world. The folkloristic iconography of their local parishes, far from degrading Catholicism to the level of superstition, actually contributed to constituting a liturgical context facilitating proximity to the sacred in a way that one-dimensional post-Vatican II Catholicism cannot. This is the only Catholicism that makes sense to rural immigrants and for centuries has allowed them to integrate personal identity, family life, and, today, to participate in the secular practices of Canadian society without necessarily making any major compromises. Up to the Vatican II reforms in the early 1960s, the Catholic Church had had no problem reconciling these "popular" practices with the "formal" religion of the central bureaucracy in Rome.[43] Such a convenient arrangement is not easy to maintain anymore.

The tragedy of "Italian" immigrants who came to Toronto between WWII

43. Had Harney been a little more familiar with the history of the Catholic Church, he may not have been so dismissive of the traditional pre-Vatican II Catholicism of the "Italian" immigrants he studied. It is a Catholicism rooted in a Franciscan tradition which makes considerably more theological sense than recent modernist versions. While Catherine Pickstock is probably correct in identifying the Franciscans' naturalism and nominalism, especially after Duns Scotus, as the *fons et origo malorum* of the subsequent disintegration of Christianity, eventually resulting in the Reformation, widespread secularization and the general dissolution of the medieval Catholic synthesis [see Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (London: Blackwell, 1998), pp. 121ff.], organizationally they were also the ones who probably contributed the most in constituting an organic liturgical context which successfully integrated mundane and spiritual life. St. Francis' followers became organizational wizards — in Antonio Gramsci's sense, veritable "organic intellectuals" of the nascent bourgeoisie, as opposed to the established Benedictine "traditional inellectuals" — and they were largely responsible, after the mid-13th century, for constructing the various particular allegorical-iconographic frameworks integrating Christian liturgy with local practices and customs, within well-defined municipal contexts. Unlike the Benedictine model, which hitherto privileged the monastic life as the fast-track to salvation (and unintendedly contributed to the Benedictines' mundane success through the commodification of sin and the marketing of absolutions — a predicament resulting in periodic monastic rebellions throughout the Middle Ages) the Franciscans' contribution to the elaboration of a particular allegorical iconography for every small town and parish checkmated the Benedictines' cultural hegemony and greatly democratized Catholicism. This is the kind of Catholicism that the "Italian" immigrants in Toronto inherited and sought to recreate in opposition to the rationalizing modernism of the Canadian Catholic bureaucracy. Far from constituting "superstition and obscurantism," it actually allowed for a Christian *modus vivendi* immensely superior to post-Vatican II "new and improved" Catholicism. On the social role of the early Fransciscans and the constitution of the "*religiones novae*," see Jacques Le Goff, "Ordres Mendiantes et Urbanisation dans la France Médioévale. Etat de l'Enquéte," in *Annales*, Vol. XXV (1970), pp. 924-46. On the Fransciscans' transformation into the first organic intellectuals of the nascent bourgeoisie, see Luigi Pellegrini, "I Quadri e i Tempi dell'Espansione dell'Ordine," in Maria Pia Alberzoni *et al.*, ed., *Francesco d'Assisi e il Primo Secolo di Storia Francescana* (Turin: Einaudi, 1997), pp. 161ff.

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and the mid-1960s is that they sought to reconstruct their religious institutions as the moral centers of their communities at a time characterized by "the total collapse of French Canadian Catholicism"[44] in particular and, *ipso facto*, Canadian Catholicism in general. Thus, instead of finding an established religious framework within which, despite all the linguistic and cultural differences, they could be integrated as earlier generations of immigrant Catholics had,[45] these immigrants were confronted with an altogether different institution, which not only did not encourage the re-creation of traditional parishes, but one that sought to assimilate them within a Church which, for all practical purposes, already had transmogrified into another Protestant sect.[46] Long before it was ratified by the practices of the liberal wing of Vatican II, the modernization of Catholicism had already taken place and become institutionalized in Quebec. As Muggeridge puts it: "French Canadian Catholicism, by far the largest and most influential part of the Church in Canada, had been radicalized at the level of the academy a decade before the Council . . . During the 1950s, French Canadian intellectuals (many of them, like Pierre Elliot Trudeau and René Lévesque, disciples of the enormously influential Dominican, founder of the University of Laval's School of Social Science) engineered the so-called 'quiet revolution' within Quebec society, whereby the Church voluntarily disengaged itself from its hitherto almost total authority over education, social welfare, unions, and cultural life."[47] Thus, instead of having the Church on their side in defending their own cultural particularity against the government imposition of multiculturalism and "Italianness," Italian immigrants also had to struggle against a Church bureaucracy allied with the government in "Italianizing" them. Harney describes some of the conflicts this state of affairs has created since the turn of the century (pp. 147-151), but as usual he concludes by

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44. Muggeridge, *The Desolate City*, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

45. These problems have been studied at length by immigration historians such as Zucchi, Iacovetta etc. Their analyses, however, are always limited to the kind of dysfunctions usually generated by attempts to integrate large number of foreign, linguistically incompetent newcomers within established English-speaking parishes (or French-speaking ones in Quebec). Consequently there is little discussion of the doctrinal tribulations the Catholic Church itself has experienced in the 20th century and the impact they have had on "Italian" immigrants. Thus, long before the signing of the Lateran Pact in 1929 and the formal reconciliation of the Catholic Church and the Fascist government in Italy, for expedient cultural and linguistic reason the Catholic Church in Toronto had already been a *de facto* effective agency the collective "Italianization." See Zucchi, *op. cit.*, pp. 132ff. Yet up to Vatican II, the Latin Mass was equally accessible (or inaccessible) to everyone, independently of which language they spoke, and the uniformity of liturgical practices in general provided a sense of universality no longer available after the 1960s Church reforms. Thus, the relativistic pseudo-particularity of Vatican II had the unintended consequence of effectively undermining the concrete universality hitherto available in local immigrant communities, even when marooned within a foreign environment.

46. See Anne Roche, *The Gates of Hell* (Toronto: Mc Clellan and Stewart, 1975).

47. Muggeridge, *The Desolate City*, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

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quoting a post-Vatican II clerical version of an ethnocultural entrepreneur bemoaning "the idolatry of saint worship" and pondering why, from his viewpoint, "instead of disappearing," these allegedly crypto-pagan pre-Vatican II practices "appeared to be increasing" in popularity (p. 152).[48]

The Futility of Anthropological Espionage

Spectacularly scandalous cases from Galileo to Lysenko have discredited efforts to politicize "scientific" research. While vindicating the necessity for "academic freedom," however, they have tended to shield researchers from accountability, or at least made it more difficult to inquire into motives and objectives. Yet, "knowledge for its own sake," a secular version of Tertullian "*credo quia est absurdum*," is equally absurd, and the question of relevance, especially in the "social sciences," needs to be posed, especially at a time in which "social scientists" seem more confused than ever about the very nature of their disciplines. What is the use of the kind of research Harney has conducted? It certainly does not help the people he has studied gain any better understanding of themselves and whatever communities they have managed to reconstruct in their new country. On the contrary, it redescribes their predicament to fit the social engineering objectives of the ruling political elite. It is part and parcel of the same strategy meant to institutionalize a particular vision of Canada by forcing the majority of the population to learn a new language it has absolutely no interest in learning, accept a bizarre constitutional framework, and chafe under one of the most massive and costly bureaucracies in the world.

Even in these terms, however, it turns out to be a failure. To the extent that the

48. As Schmitt pointed out, the Catholic Church has been always a *complexio oppositorum*, able to reconcile within its universalism the most diverse social realities. This has nothing to do with any opportunism on the part of the Church, involving doctrinal compromises Harney describes as a mixture of "polytheism, sorcery, and animism with Christian sacraments" in order to pander to "*campanilismo*" (p. 145). Rather, it reflects what Schmitt calls "a fundamental dualism that has dominated the world since the beginning of Christianity." See Schmitt, *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*, *op. cit.*, p. 51. To the extent that the role of the Church is to mediate between the infinity of the transcendent and the finitude of the immanent, "the visibility of the Church is based on something invisible. The concept of the visible Church is itself something invisible. . . Thus the Church can be *in* but not *of* this world." *Ibid.*, p. 52. The Church translates the incommensurability of the divine and the mundane into liturgical practices such as the Roman Rite, in which, in Pickstock's words, "genuine subjectivity is . . . attained through the redemptive return of doxological dispossession, thus ensuring that the subject is neither autonomously self-present, nor passively controlled from without." Pickstock, *After Writing*, *op. cit.*, p. 170. Within this theological horizon, the concrete form the Church takes may vary greatly from parish to parish, to reflect local particularities, within a liturgical context in which, however, the individual is not split between two radically different dimensions of immanence and transcendence. No matter how diverse the allegorical-iconographic configurations of the various parishes, the concrete Church effectively mediated between the invisible Church and local communities.

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information it provides is inaccurate and incomplete, and its analysis ungrounded and misleading, it can only flatter the central bureaucracy into a false sense of self-confidence concerning the function and impact of its policies, blissfully unaware of the real social dynamics engulfing a substantial sector of its population. Along with most other "social science" research, this kind of scientifically-legitimated "intelligence," sponsored, financed and ultimately appropriated by the government bureaucracy, is meant to feed directly into the social engineering apparatus.[49] Although, at various times, Harney pays lip service to the post-modern ideology of fashionable sociological discourse, whereby all social reality is "constructed" and "imagined" (hence, given its inherent arbitrary character, susceptible to endless manipulation), when confronted with having to present the results of his research, he simply recycles superficial common-sense observations. Lacking any serious theoretical perspective or any historical sense, which may have allowed him to constitute his "facts" independently of the objective interests of his ethnocultural entrepreneur informants, *Eh Paisan!* does not rate much better than most spy reports. Unlike the recently released KGB and Stasi files in the former Soviet Union and East Germany, not to mention the FBI material now available through the Freedom of Information Act, it cannot conceal its sloppiness, inaccuracies and fictional constructions under the usual cloak of secrecy available to intelligence-gathering agencies.

When all is said and done, Harney's book turns out to be only a very rough draft of a doctoral dissertation with a long way to go before it can pretend to be anything more than an inconclusive celebration of Canadian multicultural policies. His political naiveté and conformism subvert the relevance of much of the material he has dug up, while the sloppy presentation contributes to embarrassing mistakes, many of which a careful copy-editing could have eliminated. The lazy practice of transcribing without any further reworking of the raw field notes that introduce most of his chapters, presumably in order to convey a more direct feel of the subject-matter, not only fails to enliven the presentation in the way earlier works on the subject have, but mislead him into taking whatever information he was given at face value.[50] What results is a long series of occasionally

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49. These were roughly the conclusions reached by Norman Denzin at the end of the debate concerning the function of Whyte's *Street Corner Society*. See Norman Denzin, "Whose Cornerville is it, Anyway?" in *The Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (April 1992), p. 131. In the same issue, in a more charitable note, Arthur Vidich explains it as a secularized upgrading of the missionary Protestantism prevalent in Harvard before its transformation into "sociology." In either case, it remains *de facto* cultural imperialism. See Arthur Vidich, "Boston's North End: An American Epic," in *The Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (April 1992), pp. 84-89. In the Canadian context, with the government officially espousing multiculturalism as its policy, the connection between social research and social engineering is no longer merely indirect but immediately obvious, both in terms of financing of this research and the posited objectives.

50. E.g., William F. Whyte's brilliantly narrated *Street Corner Society*, *op. cit.*

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trivial, but often consequential mistakes, whose only virtue is that they often signal the presence of more serious problems.[51]

In the old days, the natives used to cook and eat anthropologists who went to study them. Today, they encounter much more sophisticated ethnocultural entrepreneurs and political elites, who instrumentalize them to legitimate particular policies and normalize pathological political predicaments. But the effort is doomed to fail. Since immigration from Italy practically stopped after the country became an advanced industrial society, "Italian" immigrants are rapidly diminishing with the passing away of that particular pre-1970s generation. Despite the government's multicultural policies and the ethnocultural entrepreneurs' mediatizing efforts, the sons and daughters of these immigrants have been effectively Canadianized. Intermarriages with all other equally mediatized "ethnic" groups are already diluting whatever "purity" of lineage there may have been at one time. As immigration from Portugal, Asia and the Third World increases, however, the same predicament will confront the newcomers before they become assimilated, as long as these policies remain in place. What is crucial here is not so much any particular identity, but that of the various communities within which the progeny of these immigrants will have become assimilated. Their fate hinges on the way Canada will negotiate its way out of the present cultural and constitutional crisis. In this process, Toronto's "Italians," along with all

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51. Thus, in one of the book's few *in*consequential linguistic blunders, which do not conceal more substantial socio-cultural problems, the Gran Sasso is described as a "mountain chain" on p. 81, only to be downgraded to a run-of-the-mill mountain a few pages later (p. 99). Common words such as "*chiacchiera*" are mispelled as "*chiacchera*" (p. 131), and historical figures such as Pietro da Celano (p. 98) are invented *in toto*. The only famous Pietro from the region is Pietro da Morrone (a small town outside Campobasso), who, in 1297, became Pope Celestine V and whose remains are still kept in the cathedral of St. Maria of Collemaggio in L'Aquila. The only famous intellectual to come out of Celano was Thomas, a follower of St. Francis of Assisi, who wrote his first biography in 1228, immediately after his mentor's death, on commission from Pope Gregory IX, in the effort to legitimate the rapid canonization of the new Saint. Unfortunately, Thomas' account became embroiled in criticisms of the Franciscans' evolving institutional *Realpolitik*, at that time concerned with changing from a preaching order of itinerant monks into the first intellectual shock-troops of the nascent urban bourgeoisie. Thus, 18 years later he was asked to write yet another biography, and later (around 1250) yet another account, *Tractatus de Miraculis Beati Francisci* — allegedly to incorporate new information, but actually to provide a reconstruction more suitable to the order's new elite. He did not succeed and, eventually, after Bonaventure finally managed to come up with a "politically correct" version, in 1266 the Franciscan bureaucracy ordered all three of Thomas' versions destroyed. Few copies survived, and all three works are now available in *Fonti Francescane, Scritti e Biografie di san Francesco d'Assisi* . . . (Assisi: Movimento Francescano, 1977). Cf. also Emanuela Prinzivalli, "Un Santo da Leggere: Francesco d'Assisi nel Percorso delle Fonti Agiografiche"; and Antonio Rigon, "Frati Minori e Società Locali," both in Alberzoni *et al.*, ed., *Francesco d'Assisi e il Primo Secolo di Storia Francescana*, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-116 and 259-281 respectively.

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other "ethnic" groups, are no longer likely to play the same passive role of their parents and will probably begin to challenge the cynical mediatizing objectives of the present political elite.

Unfortunately, there are no easy answers. Even if current multicultural policies were suddenly rescinded, it is not immediately obvious what could take their place. On the one hand, the local cultural identities of "Italian" or any other immigrant group is impossible to sustain for long other than among particular small clusters of immigrants from the same villages — a category of people either approaching retirement age or already retired. On the other hand, mediatized "Italian" identity is equally tenuous, since it is unlikely to remain very meaningful beyond the lifespan of the sons and daughters of these same immigrants. Since there is no such a thing as a "Canadian," "Ontarioan," or even "Torontonian" identity other than in terms of vague anti-American sentiments impossible to concretize beyond the defense of the Canadian nationalized health system or revulsion *vis à vis* the death penalty in the US, the only remaining option is an abstract individualism predicated on consumerism and the immediate gratification of repackaged basic needs by means of whatever new commodities can be marketed profitably. By mediatizing particular ethnic groups, anthopological espionage may contribute to upholding the illusion that multicultural homogenization provides an answer to modernity's terminal nihilism. Yet, this multicultural homogenization only constitutes a mere refinement of this standard scenario in post-industrial societies: a market segmentation along tenuous ethnic paramenters.

Can such a society be sustained after it has eroded the traditional patrimony on which it now parasitically relies? Can it generate a new ethical framework to provide meaning and direction to an otherwise culturally challenged populace? Social theory, the self-appointed consciousness of such a society, has no clue. Over two centuries after the French Revolution supposedly displaced traditional society, the welfare state, its modernist substitute, remains rudderless and still dependent for its most fundamental assumptions on an extraneous Judeo-Christian axiological horizon transubstantiated into a secular humanism — the ideology of universal human rights. Can cultural particularity be reconstituted on the basis of the concrete intersubjectivity of people interacting face-to-face within their local communities or will novel, non-instrumental and non-pathological modes of cultural formation eventually develop? Pending an answer to these questions, it may be wise to nurture whatever residual cultural particularities still thrive within the crevices of modern society and, instead of inventing new pseudo-identities, nurture their older but real counterparts by accurately describing what they have been and what they are.

Paul Piccone

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